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THE SERMON BIBLE.

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ISAIAH TO MALACHI.

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INTRODUCTION.

ISAIAH.

THE older commentaries on Isaiah, such as those of Alexander and Barnes, though not without value, have been superseded by recent expositions, of which the chief is that of Delitzsch, published in its final form in the Foreign Biblical Library of Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton (3 vols., price *7s. 6d.* each). Professor Cheyne's works on Isaiah, more especially his large commentary in two volumes, are among the most important contributions of English scholarship to Old Testament literature. Mr. G. Adam Smith's work on Isaiah, in the "Expositor's Bible," has attained a wide popularity. As a vindication of the authenticity and Messianic interpretation of prophecy, Dean Payne Smith's work may be consulted. There are sermons on particular parts of Isaiah, but none of much note. Professor Driver's work on Isaiah, in "Men of the Bible," is also very valuable.

JEREMIAH AND LAMENTATIONS.

Professor Cheyne's commentary in the "Pulpit Commentary," and his work on "Men of the Bible" may be consulted. Mr. C. J. Ball is announced to write on the Book in the "Expositor's Bible."

EZEKIEL.

The work of Fairbairn has not yet been superseded. Guthrie's "Gospel in Ezekiel" only dwells on a small part.

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Professor A. B. Davidson is announced to treat this volume in the "Cambridge Bible for Schools."

DANIEL.

The works of Auberlen, Birks, and Gaussen may be mentioned, but the chief English work is that of Pusey. Professor J. M. Fuller's commentary, in the "Speaker's Bible," is exceedingly valuable.

THE MINOR PROPHETS.

The best work by far for preachers on the Minor Prophets is that of Dr. Pusey. The great books of Pocock are not superseded. In the third series of the *Expositor* excellent lectures may be found on the Minor Prophets, by Dr. Marcus Dods and Dr. A. B. Davidson. Books on Jonah are specially numerous, the best perhaps being those of Fairbairn and Raleigh. Mr. Redford's studies on the Minor Prophets are also useful.

ISAIAH.

REFERENCES: i. 1-31.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 274. i. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1059; J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 310; J. Keble, *Sermons Occasional and Parochial*, p. 273; Parker, *Pulpit Notes*, p. 170. i. 5.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2442; G. W. McCree, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 410. i. 5, 6, 18.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 22, and vol. iii., p. 280. i. 9.—*Ibid.*, vol. ix., p. 282. i. 11-17.—*Ibid.*, vol. iii., p. 11.

Chap. i., vers. 12, 13.—**"When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread My courts?" etc.**

SUCH texts as this ought to terrify us. For they speak of religious people and of a religious nation, and of a fearful mistake which they were making, and a fearful danger into which they had fallen.

I. Isaiah tells the religious Jews of his day that their worship of God, their church-going, their Sabbaths, and their appointed feasts were a weariness and an abomination to Him. That God loathed them and would not listen to the prayers which were made to Him. That the whole matter was a mockery and a lie in His sight. These are awful words enough—that God should hate and loathe what He Himself had appointed; that what would be, one would think, one of the most natural and most pleasant sights to a loving Father in heaven—namely, his own children worshipping, blessing, and praising Him—should be horrible in His sight.

II. The text should set us on thinking, Why do I come to church? Because it is the fashion? Because I want to hear the preacher? No; to worship God. To adore God for His goodness, and to pray to Him to make us good, is the sum and substance of all wholesome worship. Then is a man fit to come to church, sins and all, if he carry his sins into church not to carry them out again safely and carefully, as we are all too apt to do, but to cast them down at the foot of Christ's cross, in the hope (and no man ever hoped that hope in vain)

that he will be lightened of that burden, and leave some of them at least behind him.

C. KINGSLEY, *The Good News of God*, p. 51.

REFERENCES: i. 13.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 365. i. 16.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 263. i. 16, 17.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve*, pp. 424, 435, 446; H. W. Beecher. *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 228; D. Burns, *Ibid.*, vol. xxix., p. 83.

Chap. i., vers. 16-18.—"Cease to do evil; learn to do well," etc.

As early then as the time of Isaiah we find the doctrine of the reformation of character dependent on forgiveness of sin distinctly taught.

Consider: I. The demand made. (1) The nature of the demand. It is for a reformation of practice. Put in one word, it is Reform. This is the one Divine call to fallen man. At one time it is an old commandment, at another a new one. Whether it be faith or love, hope or patience, that are enjoined, they are all to issue in the moral elevation of man's character. (2) The word "learn" suggests a further thought, namely, the ground of this demand for reform. The ground of the demand is the perversity of the human will. (3) Consider the justice of the demand. It is God who makes it. But He could not have made it unless it were just to do so; nor would He have made it unless it were possible for man to meet it.

II. How to meet God's demand for reform. (1) The answer of nature. The belief in the ability of man to reform himself is founded either on ignorance of the real nature of his moral condition, as was the case in the pagan world, or on a deliberate refusal to recognise the truth when it is presented concerning that condition, as was the case in Judaism, and is the case at the present day with those who persuade themselves to a belief in the infinite intrinsic capability of human nature. (2) The answer of grace. A power from without is absolutely necessary to enable man to meet the demand for reform. This power is God's forgiveness. (*a*) Pardon is an inducement to repentance, which is the first step in the reformation of character. (*b*) Pardon removes, or rather is itself, as its name implies, the removal of sin. When sin itself is removed in forgiveness, all its consequences, too, will soon vanish; and lightened of our burden, we shall feel free and ready to undertake the duties of the new life.

R. E. MORRIS, *The Welsh Pulpit of To-Day*, p. 295.

Chap. i., ver. 18.—"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord."

WHAT are a few of the leading lines of God's instruction to the soul?

I. He teaches through conscience. Conscience is a "necessary idea." Nothing is so certain as that; from east to west, from north and south, comes testimony to that fact. The poems of Homer, the awful hints and warnings of the tragic poets of Greece, the religious teachings of the farthest East, the ethical form of the strong Egyptian faith in immortality,—all combine to record the existence of this "necessary idea." Let each of us obey the invitation by keeping an ear ready for the warnings of conscience; let us lose no time. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord."

II. The soul is instructed by the providence of God. The Bible, from beginning to end, is ever exhibiting this blessed truth. The beautiful stories of the earlier patriarchs, the incidental episodes (such as that sweet picture of dutiful devotion in the Book of Ruth), the proclamations of the Prophets, the tender verses of the Psalms, as well as the whole history of the chosen people, conspire to witness to the consoling fact that "the Lord careth for His people." To learn, with ready mind, the lessons of Divine providence is to listen to the Divine invitation, "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord." Among His many lessons, surely there are two that He would teach us: (1) the blessing of a bright and patient spirit in those who are trying to serve God; (2) seek earnestly God's guidance in all times of difficulty, and confidently trust in Him.

III. God instructs the soul of the creature by the revelation of Jesus Christ. What does Jesus Christ teach? (1) In His example, as exhibited in the Gospel, He shows us a righteousness so transcendent that it corroborates the teachings of conscience, a course of action of such unvarying tenderness that it illustrates and manifests the providence of God. (2) He gives the most vivid, the most appalling, revelation of human sin; but with it, what conscience could never do of the most loving, most complete forgiveness to the penitent, and the brightest hope (after sorrow) as to human destiny, in the tragedy—the love-marked tragedy—of the Passion. (3) And beyond that, He displays to us a prospect and a power of attainment to the heights of spiritual longing, by revealing the method and confirming the promise of the implanting of His own life, of His

own image, ever more and more fully in the soul of His creature, which is the daily, hourly work of God's blessed Spirit in those who diligently seek Him.

W. J. KNOX-LITTLE, *Manchester Sermons*, p. 1.

I. GOD, having made this proposition, proceeds on the assumption that He knows Himself to be right in this case.

II. God proceeds on the assumption that man ought to be prepared to vindicate his conduct by reasons.

III. The sinner is invited to take his case to the fountain-head. It is God who invites us to state the case directly to Himself.

IV. From a proposition of this kind, what can I infer but that God's purpose is, in making it, to mingle mercy with judgment?

V. The sinner is left absolutely without excuse.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. iii., p. 49.

REFERENCES: i. 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 360, and vol. xvii., No. 1278; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 213; J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 33; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 117; S. Cox, *Expositions*, 3rd series, p. 427; R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 193. i. 22-26.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 228. i. 31.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 207.

Chap. ii., ver. 2.—"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, . . . and all nations shall flow unto it."

WHEN Christ came and took possession of His own house, it could not be but that some great changes would take place in its economy and its condition. And such there were. It was exalted and established above all earthly power, and became a refuge and home for all ages. It remained what it had been before, a Church, in its inward and characteristic structure the same; but it became what it had never been before, or only in a partial measure in the time of David and some other princes, and that in type of what was to come,—it became an imperial Church. It was the head of an empire.

I. When our Lord was ascending, He said, "All power is given unto Me in heaven, and *in earth*." We believe in His power in heaven; but, strange to say, it is usual with us to grudge Him His power upon earth. He is the invisible King of a *visible* kingdom; for it does not at all follow, because a

monarch is withdrawn from view, that therefore His kingdom must cease to be a fact in the face of day also.

II. Who are spoken of as the rulers in the kingdom, Christ's viceroys? The twelve Apostles, and first of all Peter. Their authority was equal to that of Him who appointed them. "He that receiveth you," He saith, "receiveth Me." Nay, it would seem as if their authority were even greater than that which it pleased our Lord to possess in the days of His flesh; for whereas He breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," He had formerly said, "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven Him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven Him."

III. The only question that can here arise is this: whether this imperial power was vested only in the twelve Apostles, or in others besides and after them? I answer: (1) We must conclude that the power was vested in others also, from the size of the empire; for a few persons, though inspired, cannot be supposed to have been equal to the care of all the churches. (2) Again, it is expressly said, that the Church is to last to the end of time, and the gates of hell are to fail in their warfare against it. But the Apostles were soon cut off; therefore the Church's power was vested in others besides the Apostles. (3) The promise was neither made nor fulfilled exactly to the twelve Apostles; one of them fell, and another took his place. (4) No honours which were accorded to the Apostles were accorded to them for their own sake, or were, strictly speaking, *vested* in them; they were theirs only as being instruments of Him who, being "immortal, invisible," governs His kingdom in every age in His own way; the one Master, the one Lord, the one Teacher, the one Priest, alone glorified in all His saints, while they live and when they die. Whatever honours then and powers the Apostles possessed needed not to die with them, for they never had really belonged to them.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day*, p. 26.

REFERENCES: ii. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 249. ii. 3.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 272.

Chap. ii., ver. 4.—"And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks," etc.

WE are asked how, with such passages written in sunbeams in the Book which we hold to be divine, we can regard with any complacency the acts and character of a warrior.

I. The old prophet, it is often said, was anticipating the Gospel or Christian age of the world, and was pointing out what ought to be its condition always, what some day will be actually its condition. I do not object to this statement, except for being too vague. The words, "He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people," cannot be diluted into the phrase, "The pure and benign doctrines of the Gospel or of Christianity shall be diffused over the world." They speak not of Christianity, but of Christ; not of a doctrine, but of a King. The language which describes Him here does not suggest, first of all, an image of tranquillity and peace. "He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people;" thus is He represented to us who, we believe, took upon Him the form of a servant, and was meek and lowly of heart. If, then, we make Christ our standard, we must honour any man who acknowledged right, who, we are confident, was a just man. It has been said that this sense of right and order is emphatically the quality of a soldier; and the consequence from it seems to be that the discipline and the character which is moulded by it deserve not our reprobation, but our admiration and imitation, because we are Christian men.

II. It is the next clause of the text, however, which is most frequently in people's mouths. "Observe," it is said, "how strong the words are. It is not that swords shall be thrown aside for plough-shares, or spears for pruning-hooks; the first are to be changed into the last, there being no use for them in their original shape." Then it would seem to follow that the material of which the peaceful instruments are made is the very same of which the warlike instruments were made—not the first of iron, and the other of some feeble and more flexible substance. Till, then, all the energies of war are faithfully represented in the acts and services of peace, the prophecy is not fulfilled.

III. But it is written further, "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation," etc. Observe that when the prophet says, "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation," he clearly assumes that there shall be distinct nations in the most perfect condition of society which can be conceived of. The distinctness of his own nation had been the assurance to him that God had chosen him and his fathers, that He Himself was in the midst of them. He longed for a time when each nation should have the same stable ground for its existence, when each should feel that the God of the whole earth was its God.

Therefore let us be sure that if we would ever see a real family of nations, such as the prophets believed would one day emerge out of the chaos they saw around them—a family of nations which shall own God as their Father, and Christ as their Elder Brother—this must come from each nation maintaining its own integrity and unity.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons on the Sabbath Day*, p. 78.

REFERENCES: ii. 4.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2188; B. Jowett, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 177. ii. 5.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 280; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 340; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 263; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 216; H. P. Liddon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 167.

Chap. ii., ver. 11.—"The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day."

I. IN the day of judgment will be fulfilled, once and for ever, all the sayings and prophecies of our Lord and His Apostles concerning the exaltation of the lowly and the humiliation of the high and lofty ones. Recollect what are the things which we naturally most admire in this world, and see if they will not one and all come to an end in that day. (1) "All cedars of Lebanon which are high and lifted up," that is, the great and high-born persons, to whom God has given a place in the world above others. (2) "The high mountains and the hills that are lifted up." All this show of visible glories will have an end, and so will the kingdoms and empires, the companies and cities of men, to which in Scripture these mountains are compared. (3) In the next sentence the prophet passes from the creations of God to those of men: from the trees and mountains to "high towers and fenced walls," to the "ships of Tarshish and to pleasant pictures," *i.e.*, to all those works and contrivances which we most admire when they belong to others, and on which, being our own, we are most tempted to rely. All these things the prophet speaks of, to warn us that the day of the Lord of hosts is fast coming upon them; that day which will put an end to them all.

II. Consider how the poor and lowly will be exalted in that day, if they be poor and lowly in heart. The great pattern and example of God's favour to the poor, towards which all eyes and hearts will be drawn, will be the appearance of the lowly Son of Mary, of Him who had not where to lay His Head, the rejected, the mocked, the scourged and crucified

One, upon His throne of glory, judging the world. We shall see "all things put under Him" who was a "very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people." And together with Him we shall see His saints crowned and glorious. There will be a great multitude of poor persons, such as Lazarus in the parable, who lived and died unknown among men, slighted, perhaps ill-used, by those who were most bound to help them; but because they had faith and patience and obedience, Christ will own them in that day as His own members, His own poor.

J. KEBLE, *Sermons for the Christian Year: Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 279.

Chap. ii., ver. 12.—"The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low."

PARTY spirit discomfited by Christ's advent.

I. In every age in which religion has not been utterly disregarded, perhaps even when it has been practically set aside by the great majority of men, there is usually some one strong tendency at work, which either divides into two great portions the minds of the more serious and reflecting, or at least colours and designates a deeper and more essential division. No one will deny that in our own time, and especially in the Universities, a division of this kind into the main directions and tendencies of religious opinions does manifestly exist. The serious and earnest are met by a strong temptation to throw themselves into one or other of these schools or parties in religion, which appear to be alone deeply engaged in the conflicts of the faith on earth.

II. Consider what must be the consequence of the habit of early partisanship. (1) Be assured that no one set of opinions, no one body of teachers, is or can be in possession of the whole truth. He who so allies himself with one party, in the warfare of religious opinion, as to make its cause, as a party, his own, is quite sure, whichever be his side, to be fighting in the end against some portion of God's truth, and in behalf of some portion, whether less or greater, of that error which the enemy, while men slept, has sown amongst it. (2) Christian candour and Christian charity can scarcely co-exist, even for a time, with a spirit of decided partisanship.

III. Let the text recall our thoughts to a coming day, when the spirit of religious partisanship, like every other offspring

of human pride, shall be subjected to the searching light of the day of the Lord of hosts. That day shall be upon everything that is lofty and lifted up, and shall bring it low. And is not this the character of every human party, of every human system, whether in things divine or earthly? Think what the day of the Lord will be to him who has disputed about religion without its entering into his soul; who has done battle for what he called the truth, instead of opening the windows of his own heart to let it fully in; who has argued about God's grace, and the means and channels of its effectual working, instead of being himself, in will and life and character, transformed by its renewing.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Nine Sermons in the Chapel of Harrow School*, p. 25.

SCEPTICISM discomfited by Christ's advent.

I. Among the causes of the spirit of religious scepticism, there is (1) an early habit of spiritual negligence; (2) a state of exaggerated and credulous belief.

II. Consider the inseparable consequences of such a state, whatever be the peculiar causes out of which it springs. (1) He who is in suspense about the truth of the Gospel cannot pray. He that cometh to God must believe that He is. He who feels that he has sinned and that God is holy knows that he needs a mediator; and he that would trust in a mediator must believe that He is. (2) He cannot resist sin. He who is in suspense about the truth of Christ's Gospel is as weak as he who denies it—as weak, yea, weaker. For the other knows that he is thrown upon the resources of his own unaided strength, and he summons them all together for his support. He can take the shield of pride, and the helmet of self-confidence, and the sword of reason; and with these, within their own narrow limits, he can go forth and conquer. But the man who doubts—who would be a Christian, or thinks he would, but cannot satisfy his intellect of the certainty of word of Christ—he is a divided man. He has cast off his other armour; and this, the armour of God, he cannot take, for he has not proved it.

III. Think what the advent will be to such a mind. The day of the Lord of hosts will be "upon" it, and will bring it low. We fools inquired whether there *was* a day coming; and behold, it is come. While we inquired and reasoned and speculated, He of whom we doubted was carrying on His judgment upon us. He who was to come demanded fruit. He

is come seeking fruit, and He finds nothing, but leaves only. C. J. VAUGHAN, *Nine Sermons*, p. 47.

REFERENCES: ii. 12.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages from the Prophets*, vol. i., p. 1. ii. 16.—J. H. Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 365. ii. 17.—W. J. Knox-Little, *Ibid.*, vol. xxi., p. 406. ii. 18.—G. John, *Ibid.*, vol. xxii., p. 129. ii. 20.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2230. ii. 22.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages from the Prophets*, p. 9. iii. 10, 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 729; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 180; E. Mason, *A Pastor's Legacy*, p. 206. iii. 11.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 17. iv. 1.—C. A. Fowler, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 1. iv. 2.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 273.

Chap. iv., vers. 2-5.—"In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel," etc.

I. NOTICE, first, the preparation for the promise. In the earlier verses of this chapter two things are presented as antecedent to the gifts of blessing—that is, the coming of the Divine Saviour, and His discipline for holiness within His Church.

II. The promise itself. There is: (1) The presence of God with His Church. (2) The presence of God for counsel. This was the primary purpose for which the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire were given. For guidance in the perplexities of life, God's presence is promised in the churches of to-day. (3) The presence of God for defence. Many a time lyers-in-wait have attacked the Church, and empires have undertaken to destroy her, and have called up the secret resources of power for her overthrow, and yet she lives; while the names of her oppressors are forgotten or remembered only with accusation and with shame; and it must be so as long as God lives to protect and bless the Church that He has chosen and redeemed.

W. MORLEY PUNSHON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 372.

REFERENCES: v. i.—T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 289; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi, p. 272; H. Thompson, *Concionalia: Outlines for Parochial Use*, 2nd series, p. 5; F. Delitzsch, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iii., p. 60.

Chap. v., vers. 1, 2.—"My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: . . . and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes."

I. "HE looked that it should bring forth grapes." This is

surely not unreasonable. It is exactly what you and I should do. It will not be denied by anybody that *we* are receiving the highest advantages that ever fell to the lot of the world. God might challenge us to say what He has left undone. We live (1) in the day of full revelation, (2) under the highest civilisation. "It brought forth wild grapes," and yet everything was done for it that could be done. The possibility of a man going down to darkness through the very light of the sanctuary, the possibility of taking the rain and dew and light of heaven and transforming them into poison, and offering a bitter disappointment to the heart of God, is a fearful thought.

II. Notice what becomes of the vineyard. "I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down." And if God do so with the vineyard which He planted in the ancient time, what shall He say to the clouds, what shall he say to the earth, what shall He say to all the influences of our life, when we have taken counsel together and slain His Son, and steeped the vineyard in the blood of His well-beloved?

PARKER, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 384.

REFERENCES: v. 1-7.—*Homilist*, Excelsior Series, vol. v., p. 107. v. 1-30.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 276.

Chap. v., ver. 2.—"He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes."

To us God says, as to Israel of old, "What more could I do to My vineyard that I have not done? Why, then, when I looked for grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"

Is not this indictment true? No true patriot, much less Christian, can look without grave anxiety on the tastes and tendencies of the times in which we live. Wild grapes, offensive to God, mischievous to others, and ruinous to us, are being produced on every hand. The husbandman describes some of them.

I. The excessive greed of gain—the oppressive selfishness that tramples under foot the claims of brotherhood and the rights of men.

II. The crying sin of intemperance.

III. The headstrong rush after pleasure; the follies and frivolities of the tens of thousands whose whole time and tastes and talents are wickedly laid at the shrine of sensual delights.

IV. Sensuality in its grosser and fouler shapes.

V. Infidelity. "Woe unto them that regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operations of His hands."

VI. Fraud, falsehood, and dishonesty. "Woe to them that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter," etc.

Such are some of the elements of moral mischief which threaten the ruin of our beloved land. If England lives on, and grows in lustre as she lives, it must be because the King Immanuel is undisputed monarch of the national heart, uncontrolled director of the national policy and the national will.

J. JACKSON WRAY, *Light from the Old Lamp*, p. 241.

I. CONSIDER the distinguishing features which, in God's allegory, separate the grape from the wild grape. (1) The good grape is not in a state of nature; the wild grape is. Either it has had no culture, or it has not responded to its culture. Therefore it is wild. The secret of its state lies in that one word "wild." (2) The wild grape does not grow or ripen into use. It springs, it hangs on the bough, and it falls, for itself. No man is the better for it. None gather strength or refreshment or delight there. (3) The wild grape has not the sweetness of the true. It is harsh and sour, because (4) the wild grape has never been grafted.

II. The first thing of all, without which everything else in religion is only a blank, is, and must be, a real living union with the Lord Jesus Christ. By that union, the life which was unchanged, selfish, tasteless or bitter, and without Christ, becomes a new, expansive, loving, Christ-like life, and the wild grape in the desert is turned into the true grape of paradise.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 4th series, p. 95.

Chap. v., ver. 4.—"What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?"

I. THE first way of putting, or rather of vindicating, the question of our text is when we contend that Atheism has a far better apology for resisting the evidences of a God which are spread over creation, than worldly-mindedness for manifesting insensibility to redemption through Christ. Atheism may ask for a wider sphere of expatiation and for a more glowing stamp of divinity, for it falls within our power to conceive a richer manifestation of the Invisible Godhead. But the worldly-minded cannot ask for a more touching proof of the love of the Almighty, or for a more bounteous provision for human

necessities, or for more moving motives to repentance and obedience. What has been done for the vineyard, regard being had to the augustness of the Being who did it, proclaims us ruined if we bring not forth such fruits as God requires at our hands.

II. We may affirm that as much has been done as could have been done for the vineyard, regard being had to the completeness and fulness of the work, as well as the greatness of its Author. Has not much been done for the vineyard, since redemption thus meets the every necessity of the guilty, the helpless, and the wretched—for creatures whom it found in the lowest degradation, and leaves them not till it elevates them to the noblest exaltation?

III. Much of what has been done for the vineyard consists in the greatness of the reward which the Gospel proposes to righteousness, and the greatness of the punishment which it denounces on impenitence. It was not redemption from mere temporary evil that Jesus Christ effected. The consequences of transgression spread themselves through eternity; and the Saviour, when He bowed His head and said, "It is finished," had provided for the removal of these consequences in all the immenseness, whether of their magnitude or their duration. Much, exceeding much, has been done by God for the vineyard, seeing that He has opened before us prospects for eternity, than which imagination can conceive none more brilliant if we close with the proffers, and none more appalling if we refuse.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1796.

REFERENCES: v. 4.—C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons Chiefly Practical* p. 219. v. 6.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 219. v. 9.—W. V. Robinson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 148. v. 18, 19.—R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i., p. 82.

Chap. v., ver. 20.—"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"

I. THE sin against which I would warn you is the sin of disregarding, and even of in the least degree underrating, the eternal distinctions of right and wrong; it is, in one word, the sin of viewing things in their wrong aspects, or of calling things by their wrong names. To talk otherwise than sadly and seriously of sin is sin.

II. The cause of the sin is a faint appreciation of moral

evil; a tampering with it, a destruction of that healthy instinct which revolts at it. It is the very nature of sin, that the more we know of it the less we know it; the more we are familiar with it the less do we understand its vileness.

III. The punishment of this sin is nothing less than the failure of all life—the waste, the loss, the shipwreck of the human soul—the sapping of every moral force and every vital instinct. And this is death. This is the worst woe that can befall finally those who have learnt to call things by their wrong names—to call evil good, and good evil.

F. W. FARRAR, *In the Days of thy Youth*, p. 129.

REFERENCES: v. 20.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 36; F. W. Farrar, *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 178.

Chap. vi., ver. 1.—"In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple."

I. "I SAW the Lord," etc. Some of you may have been watching a near and beautiful landscape in the land of mountains and eternal snows, till you have been exhausted by its very richness, and till the distant hills which bounded it have seemed, you knew not why, to limit and contract the view; and then a veil has been withdrawn, and new hills, not looking as if they belonged to this earth, yet giving another character to all that does belong to it, have unfolded themselves before you. This is a very imperfect likeness of that revelation which must have been made to the inner eye of the prophet, when he saw another throne than the throne of the house of David, another King than Uzziah or Jotham, another train than that of priests or minstrels in the temple, other winged forms than those golden ones which overshadowed the mercy-seat.

II. "Above the throne stood the seraphim," etc. The sense of awe increasing with the clearness and purity of a spirit, and with the nearness of its approach to God; the face being veiled which receives its light from Him, and most covets to behold Him; the absence of all wish to display their own perfections in spirits that are perfect; the freedom and willingness to go anywhere, to do any errands of mercy,—these are some of the more obvious thoughts which the study of this vision suggests.

III. The vision reaches its highest point in the cry, Holy, holy, holy. It is the holiness of God which the seraphim proclaim, that which cannot be represented to the eye, that

of which descriptions and symbols offer no image. It was this which led the prophet to say, "Woe is me! for I am undone."

IV. The live coal on the altar is a substance dead and cold in itself, which has been kindled from above, and therefore is capable of imparting life and warmth. That warmth and life, communicated to the prophet, take away his iniquity and purge his sin.

V. "Here am I; send me." The mighty change which has been wrought in him is soon apparent. He is sure that God cares for Israelites, and has a message to them; he is sure that a man is to be the bearer of that message. The new fire which has entered into him makes him ready to offer himself as that man.

VI. The most awful lesson which Isaiah had to teach his people was that God's own ordinances, the regular sequence of sovereigns, the duties and symbols of the temple, were contributing to make their eyes dim, and their ears deaf, and their hearts fat. They were seeing all the outward tokens of an invisible King, but they perceived not *Him*.

VII. "Yet in it shall be a tenth." The nation will be preserved; the remnant, the tenth, would be a pledge and witness of its preservation. Their preservation would prove that the nation was a sacred and immortal thing, because the holy seed was in the midst of it, because it did not derive its life or its unity from this or that believing man, or from a multitude of believing men; but from Him in whom they believed; from that Divine King who lived, though king Uzziah and all other kings died,—nay, though the whole land should seem to die.

F. D. MAURICE, *Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament*, p. 218.

REFERENCE: vi. 1.—J. W. Lance, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 244.

Chap. vi., vers. 1, 2.

I. THE spiritual or angelic life on earth consists not only of devotion. The seraph himself, though indeed the spirit of adoration is upon him always, is not always engaged in direct acts of praise. "With twain he did fly," speed forth, like lightning, upon the errands on which God sends him. There is a deep-seated necessity for work in the constitution of our nature. One of the greatest thinkers of antiquity defined happiness to be "an energy of the soul." The reason why activity fails in numberless instances to secure happiness is

that it is separated from God, that it is not in His service and interests.

II. There is a contemplative element in the service of the seraphim—their activity is fed from the springs of their devotion. And so it must be with God's human servants. The activity which flows from ambition, the diligence which is purely mechanical and the result of habit, is not angelic diligence and activity. To attempt to lead the spiritual life without devotion is even a greater mistake than to go apart from our duties in order to lead it. Our flying on God's errands will be an unhallowed flight, if we do not first secretly adore Him in our hearts.

E. M. Goulburn, *Thoughts on Personal Religion*, p. 30.

Chap. vi., vers. 1-3.

We have here in this wondrous vision the proper inauguration of the great evangelical prophet to his future work.

I. First, he gives the date of the vision. "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord." What would he say but this: "In the year when the crowned monarch of the earth went down into the dust and darkness of the tomb, and all the pomp and pageantry which had surrounded him for a little while dissolved and disappeared, I saw another king, even the King Immortal, sitting upon His throne, which is for ever and ever"? How simply and yet how grandly are earth and heaven here brought together, and the fleeting phantoms of one set over against the abiding realities of the other!

II. What is the first impression which this glorious vision makes upon the prophet? His first cry is not that of exultation and delight, but rather of consternation and dismay. "Woe is me! for I am undone." He who had uttered this cry was one who had kept himself from his iniquity, holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience; and yet in that terrible light he saw and avowed himself as a man undone, saw stains in himself which he had not imagined before, discovered impurities which he had not dreamt of before, saw his own sin and his people's sin, till that mighty cry of anguish was wrung from him. Yet that moment, with all its dreadfulness, was a passage into a true life.

III. Observe the manner in which the guilt of sin is here, as evermore in Holy Scripture, spoken of as taken away by a free act of God,—an act of His in which man is passive; in which he has, so to speak, to stand still and see the salvation

of the Lord,—an act to which he can contribute nothing, save indeed only that divinely awakened hunger of the soul after the benefit which we call faith. It is quite another thing with the *power* of sin. In the subduing of the power of sin we must be fellow-workers with God; all the faculties of our renewed nature will need to be strained to the uttermost.

IV. Behold the joyful readiness with which the prophet now offers himself for the service of His God. "Here am I; send me." He stops not to inquire whereunto the Lord would send him, to undertake what painful labour, to drink what cup of suffering, to be baptized with what baptism of blood. Be the task what it may, he is ready for it.

R. C. TRENCH, *Sermons New and Old*, p. 98 (see also *Sermons Preached in Ireland*, p. 166).

REFERENCES: vi. 1-3.—M. Nicholson, *Communion with Heaven*, p. 57; R. W. Forrest, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 492. vi. 1-4.—*Homilist*, Excelsior series, vol. ii., p. 347.

Chap. vi., vers. 1-8.

I. CONSIDER what the prophet saw. He sees Jehovah as Ruler, Governor, King; He is upon a throne, high and lifted up. It is the throne of absolute sovereignty: of resistless, questionless supremacy over all. He is in the temple where the throne is the mercy-seat, between the cherubim; over the ark of the covenant, which is the symbol and seal of friendly communion. His train, the skirts of His wondrous garment of light and love, filled the temple. Above, or upon, that train stood the seraphim. These are not, as I take it, angelic or super-angelic spirits, but the Divine Spirit Himself, the Holy Ghost, appearing thus in the aspect and attitude of gracious ministry. With this great sight voice and movement are joined. A voice of adoring awe fills the august temple with the echoing sound. The voice occasions commotion, excitement, shaken door-posts, the smoke of the glorious cloudy fire filling all the house.

II. How the prophet felt. It is a thorough prostration. He falls on his face as one dead. He cannot stand that Divine presence—that living, personal, Divine presence—abruptly confronting him in the inmost shrine of the Lord's sanctuary, and the sanctuary of his own heart. What the Lord really is, thus flashing on his conscience, shows him what he is himself. Undone! unclean! Unclean in the very sphere and line of living in which I ought to be most scrupulously clean!

III. How the prophet's case was met. There, full in his

view, is an altar with its sacrifice; present to him then, though future; with a living coal from that living altar, the blessed Spirit touches him at the very point of his deepest self-despair. And the effect is as immediate as the touch. Nothing comes in between. Enough that there are, on the one side, the unclean lips, and on the other the live coal from off the altar. To the one let the other be applied, graciously, effectually, by the sevenfold, myriadfold, agency of the Spirit who is ever before the throne on high. The prophet asks nothing more. He hears the voice, as of Him who said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

IV. The subsequent offer and command. Two things are noticeable here: the grace of God in allowing the prophet, thus exercised, to be a volunteer for service; and the unreservedness of the prophet's volunteering. It is no half-hearted purpose, conditional on circumstances; but the full, single-eyed heartiness of one loving much, because forgiven much, that breaks out in the frank, unqualified, unconditional self-enlistment and self-enrolment in the Lord's host,—"Here am I; send me."

R. S. CANDLISH, *Sermons*, p. 86.

REFERENCES: vi. 1-8.—H. F. Burder, *Sermons*, p. 115; S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. ii., pp. 18, 21. vi. 1-10.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 283. vi. 1-11.—*Ibid.*, vol. iv., p. 274.

Chap. vi., ver. 2.—"Above it stood the seraphims," etc.

Is it not strange, that of those parts of an angel's figure, which seem as if they were made only for action, four out of six are used for an entirely different purpose? It is to teach us, that it is not every power which we have—and which we might think given us for public service, and for the outer life—which is really intended by God for that use. Never think that large faculties are fitted only for large enterprises, and that all your endowments are to be spent on that which is to meet the general eye. Remember that of six wings an angel uses only two to fly with.

I. "With twain he covered his face." Similarly did Abraham, when he talked with God; and Moses in the bush, and Elijah and John. For the face is the expression of a man. His intellect, his heart, are there, and therefore the "covering of the face" is the confession of the weakness and unworthiness of the mind. It is the acknowledgment of the infinite distance of God. It is the sense of His exceeding glory.

II. "And with twain he covered his feet." In order, I suppose, that his very form and motion might not be seen; and therefore it is mentioned before the flight. He did not set out until, as far as possible, himself was concealed. There shall be simply the fact of a mission, and the message; so that if an angel were to bring God's embassy to you, you would not see the angel.

III. "And with twain he did fly." We are taught that angels are always interchanging some nearer worship, or some further ministry. An angel's being gives four parts to humility, and two to service. Be it with us the same. All life, humility and service; but still to humility the largest share.

IV. Why is an angel so very humble? (1) An angel is very great, and therefore he grows humble. (2) An angel is always conversant with the great things of God. (3) An angel knows and is sure that he is loved.

V. Why could an angel fly so well? (1) Because he rests. (2) Because he is disencumbered of self.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 4th series, p. 34.

REFERENCES: vi. 2.—W. G. Forbes, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iii., p. 239. vi. 2, 3.—B. Lambert, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 168.

Chap. vi., vers. 2-4.—"Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly;" etc.

I. THE seraphim, or burning ones—these strange mystic creatures whom Isaiah beheld hovering above Jehovah's throne, and whose resounding cries pierced his soul. The first thing that strikes us is their redundance of wings. They each had six, only two of which were used for flying; the others, with which they shrouded their faces and their feet, were, apparently, quite superfluous. Was it not sheer waste to be possessing wings that were merely employed as covering, and never spread for flight? And yet, perhaps, without this shrouding of their faces and their feet, they might not have answered so well high Heaven's purposes, might not have swept abroad with such undivided intentness, and such entire abandonment on their Divine errands.

We meet sometimes with these seemingly wasted wings in men, in the form of powers or capabilities, knowledges or skills, for the exercise of which there is no scope or opportunity in

their lot, which they are not called on or able to apply. And yet a gift or capacity for which our position affords no adequate application may, nevertheless, be a secret serviceable force in us, rendering us all the wiser or mightier in the position that is below our abilities. We may be moving there more beautifully and more sufficiently on account of the wings that hang motionless.

II. Look at the apparent contradiction here between the covered faces of the seraphim and their loud temple-shaking shouts. Fancy the posts of the Lord's house quivering, and the prophet's heart stirred to its depths beneath the cries of those whose heads were bowed and hid behind their wings! Here to me, however, is an image or adumbration of much truth. Great, penetrating, and inspiring utterances, like the utterances of the seraphim of Isaiah's vision, are they not always connected with some deep, still inwardness, with some profound withdrawal and retirement of soul? Is it not always from such as have held their breath that they come? from such as have brooded oft in solitude and sighed, being burdened?

III. Notice the unintentional, unpurposed effect produced by the seraphim; the much commotion they created without in the least aiming at or meaning it. Earnestness and enthusiasm in a cause will generally effect more than it seeks or thinks of.

IV. In the composition of the seraphim we may see imaged three things, which are always involved in real greatness of character, without which no real nobility is attained. (1) "They covered their faces"—it was the expression of humility. (2) "They covered their feet"—it was theirs to fly, and they would not be tempted to walk. Devotion to some chosen life-purpose involves always some resolute self-limiting in relation to things lawful enough, but not expedient, and always impels to it. (3) "With twain they did fly"—swift, so swift to execute the errands of Jehovah; and faithful velocity, instantaneous and vivid movement in obedience to the voice of the Lord within you,—this is the third of the three essentials to real greatness of character and nobility of life which Isaiah's seraphim suggest.

S. A. Tipple, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 24.

Chap. vi., ver. 3.—"And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory."

I. The vision of God is the call of the prophet. Nowhere

is the thought presented to us in the Bible with more moving force than in the record of Isaiah's mission. The very mark of time by which the history is introduced has a pathetic significance. It places together in sharp contrast the hasty presumption of man and the unchanging love of God. Isaiah, a layman, was, it appears, in the temple court, and he saw in a trance the way into the holiest place laid open. He beheld not the glory resting upon the symbolic ark, but the Lord sitting upon the throne, high and lifted up; not the carved figures of angels, but the seraphim standing with outstretched wings, ready for swift service; not the vapour of earthly incense, but the cloud of smoke which witnessed to the majesty which it hid. This opening of "the eyes of his heart" was God's gift, God's call to him. For an eternal moment Isaiah's senses were unsealed. He saw that which is, and not that which appears when we recall what Judaism was at the time,—local, rigid, exclusive. We can at once understand that such a vision, such a revelation taken into the soul, was for Isaiah an illumination of the world. He could at last see all creation in its true nature through the light of God. Humbled and purified in his humiliation, he could have but one answer when the voice of the Lord required a messenger: "Here am I; send me."

II. As the vision of God is the call of the prophet, so it is this vision which the prophet has to proclaim and to interpret to his fellow-men, not as an intellectual theory, but as an inspiration of life. The prophet's teaching must be the translation of his experience. He bears witness of that which he has seen. His words are not an echo, but a living testimony. The heart alone can speak to the heart. But he who has beheld the least fragment of the Divine glory, he who has spelt out in letters of light on the face of the world one syllable of the Triune Name, will have a confidence and a power which nothing else can bring. Only let him trust what he has seen, and it will become to him a guiding star till he rests in the unveiled presence of Christ.

III. The vision of God is also the chastening of the prophet. And in the fulfilment of our prophetic work we need more than we know the abasing and elevating influences which the vision of Isaiah and the thoughts of to-day* are fitted to create or deepen. For our strengthening and for our purifying, we must seek for ourselves, and strive to spread about

* Preached on Trinity Sunday.

us the sense of the awfulness of being, as those who have seen God at Bethlehem, Calvary, Olivet, and on the throne encircled by a rainbow as an emerald; the sense, vague and imperfect at the best, of the illimitable range of the courses and issues of action; the sense of the untold vastness of that life which we are content to measure by our feeble powers; the sense of the majesty of Him before whom the angels veil their faces. B. F. WESTCOTT, *Christus Consummator*, p. 163.

I. Two of the Divine attributes form the theme of the seraphs' hymn: God's holiness as inherent in Himself; His glory as manifested in the earth. Holiness, the first of these, denotes, fundamentally, a state of freedom from all imperfection, specially from all moral imperfection; a state, moreover, realised with such intensity as to imply not only the absence of evil, but antagonism to it. It is more than goodness, more than purity, more than righteousness; it embraces all these in their ideal completeness, but it expresses besides the recoil from everything which is their opposite.

II. But not only does the seraphic hymn celebrate the Divine nature in its own trancendent purity and perfection, it celebrates it as it is manifested in the material world: "the fulness of the whole earth is His glory." By "glory" we mean the outward show or state attendant upon dignity or rank. The glory, then, of which Isaiah speaks, is the outward expression of the Divine nature. Pictured as visible splendour, it may impress the eye of flesh; but any other worthy manifestation of the being of God may be not less truly termed His glory. It is more than the particular attribute of power or wisdom; it is the entire fulness of the Godhead, visible to the eye of faith, if not to the eye of sense, in the concrete works of nature, arresting the spectator and claiming from him the tribute of praise and homage.

III. Wherein does the world so reflect the being of God as to be the expression of His glory? It is visible (1) in the fact, as such, of creation; (2) in the means by which an abode has been prepared for the reception of life and intelligence, and the majestic scale upon which the process has been conceived and carried out; (3) in the rare and subtle mechanism which sustains the world in every part, and the intrinsic adequacy and beauty of the results.

IV. Can we trace any evidence of the moral character of God, or is the earth full merely of the tokens of His power? It is difficult to think that we are mistaken in tracing it in the con-

stitution of human nature, in the affections and aspirations which it displays, in the conditions upon which social life is observed to depend. He who has inspired human nature with true impulses of justice and generosity, of sympathy and love, with admiration for the heroic and noble, with scorn for the ignoble and the mean, cannot but be possessed of a kindred character Himself. Though the rays are broken and the image is obscured, the moral glory of the Creator shines in the world; it is reflected in the verdict of the individual conscience; it is latent in the ethical sanctions upon which the permanence and welfare of society depends.

S. R. DRIVER, *The Anglican Pulpit of To-Day*, p. 456.

REFERENCES: vi. 3.—B. F. Westcott, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 363; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 336, and vol. xviii., p. 280; F. Godet, *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 110; J. Keble, *Sermons from Ascension Day to Trinity Sunday*, p. 364; J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 362. vi. 4.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii., p. 33.

Chap. vi., ver. 5.—"For mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."

THE vision of Isaiah is a true symbol of the soul's progress.

I. The first stage of the vision is the revelation of God in His glory and in His holiness. The spiritual being of man truly begins when he has seen God. This vision of God must be a moral vision, that is, the apprehension of God as a King and Lawgiver, and therefore, as in relation to ourselves, our duty, and our affection. There is no true vision of God which embraces the entire vision of man until the eye of the spirit has been opened, and we gaze at God, not an idea or a fancy, but a Being great, majestic, holy, sitting upon a throne with law and claim even upon ourselves.

II. The second stage of the vision is the effect of this revelation upon the heart of the prophet. The sight of God is followed by the consciousness of personal sin. The claim of God is seen in the kingship which the throne symbolises. To know God is also to know duty, and to know duty is to know failure and disobedience, and the miserable deflections from duty which mock our human lives.

III. The next change of the vision is the purifying act of the seraph, who flies with a coal from the altar, and touches the lips of the penitent prophet. And here we recognise the sanctifying of the aroused soul by a relation to sacrifice; the confession of previous guilt is followed by the removal of the sin through a Divine act. (1) To the consciously guilty, there is a means of

forgiveness. (2) The coal is from the altar. The purification is associated with sacrifice, and the means of that purifying follows and depends upon the burnt offering. Does not this point us to the grand Christian doctrine that sin is taken from the confessing soul by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God?

IV. The last change in the vision is the reply of the sanctified spirit to the requirement of God; and this points to the further stage of spiritual growth, that which follows upon the reception of saving power—acceptance and obedience to the Divine will.

L. D. BEVAN, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 364.

REFERENCE: vi. 5.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 280.

Chap. vi., vers. 5-8.

THESE verses teach us the essentials of true worship and of acceptable approach to God. And they seem to indicate these essentials as threefold, involving:—

I. A sense of personal wretchedness. To worship truly, there must be a sense of our own nothingness and need. The sense of wretchedness is first induced by the contemplation of the holiness and majesty of God. It is relieved by the condescension and mercy of the King. He is not *only* holy. "Mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace embrace each other;" and in that embrace the man who is undone is folded, and invited to bring forth his offering.

II. A sense of pardon. "Our God is a consuming fire," and our first contemplation of Him thus is one which appals and overcomes us. But a little further prostration before the Holy One shows that the fire is a purging fire, not to consume the man, but only to erase the confessed uncleanness from his lips. With the anointing of the holy fire on the lip, there comes the new life into the heart, and now the mortal may mingle his praises with the seraphim themselves.

III. But worship is not complete without service. To the ascription of the heart and lip there must be added the alacrity and obedience of the life. There was service for the seraphim: to fly with the live coal. And there is service for the seer: to fly with the living message. "Here am I; send me." Here is the alacrity of obedience. There is no curious inquiry about the nature of the service. The man becomes as winged as the seraph.

A. MURSELL, *Lights and Landmarks*, p. 72.

REFERENCES: vi. 5-8.—H. T. Edwards, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 353. vi. 6-7.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages from the Prophets*, vol. i., p. 17.

Chap. vi., vers. 6-8.—"Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar," etc.

THERE must be a relation between prayer and action: between prayer, which is the soul of the inward life; and action, which is the substance of the outward.

I. Prayer is the preparation for action. What prayer is to preaching, that is action to prayer, its end and goal. That sermon is successful which makes men pray; that prayer is successful which makes men act. (1) It is necessary to remember that action has a spiritual field as well as an outward. There is an action of the soul, which is the highest of all practical workings. That living energy of conscious and fervent love—love to God, and love to man—which goes forth in holy aspirations, charitable feelings, and benevolent designs, is action, and the noblest action. (2) Prayer, which is the arming of the soul, must have respect to the items of the conflict even more than to the sum. The prayer which would affect action must be minute and detailed, as well as earnest.

II. Action is the working out of prayer. Even as the prophet, when the live coal had touched his lips, purging iniquity, heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" and answered, "Here am I; send me," so will the man of prayer, and the man to whom Christ is all, go forth in the spirit of prayer and in the strength of faith, to do the work of God, inward and outward, in his vocation. (1) In prayer he has received power; (2) he has anticipated trial; (3) he acts in the spirit of prayer; (4) he looks forward to the prayer of evening. The prospect of prayer is powerful with him, like its retrospect. He would fain be able to close the day, not in depression, but in thankfulness; not as a vanquished man, but as one who has done all and stands.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Voices of the Prophets*, p. 194.

Chap. vi., ver. 8.

I. GOD often chooses marked seasons for His greatest self-manifestations; makes individual souls associate eventful days with their own more personal history. It was so with Isaiah. In that memorable year, naturally speaking, he himself was to see God.

II. It is the sight of the King which works conviction. One half-hour of Divine communion, one resolute determined entering of the Holy of Holies, that we may see the Lord seated

upon His throne, and the holy angels veiling face and feet as they sing His praise, will do more for us in the wholesome work of self-abasement and self-abhorrence, because it will bring us into the light which alone makes manifest, and show us, in the very act of condemning, the beauty of the holiness which condemns.

III. Yet even the sense of sin might paralyse being alone. The man who is to do God's work must not only see himself in God's light, but see also how the light which exposes is a light also to purify and to transform. There is an altar of Divine sacrifice kindled from heaven—it stands not within, but in front of the Divine dwelling—and each coal of it is for the purging of the conscience. God sends His messenger to fetch from that altar—which is, being interpreted, the Cross of Jesus—a live coal to touch the unclean lips, and take away the iniquity which would else preclude the service.

IV. God asks, Whom shall I send? God wants a person. He cannot send a thing, nor a machine, nor a sound,—no, nor even a book. God wants us not to aid Him in guiding the stars in their courses, or in giving growth to the vegetable or life to the animal. For us, God's business is with human lives, human souls. That which God has in view, that which God is perpetually taking counsel upon, is the welfare, the happiness, and, if either have been disturbed, then the restoration, the rectification, the redemption, the salvation, of the lives which He created, of the souls which He has made. When He says, Whom shall I send? He inquires, in other words, Who among the living will lend a hand to this work? Be jealous to be the one sent.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Half-Hours in the Temple Church*, p. 177.

REFERENCES: vi. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 687, and vol. xxiii., No. 1351; A. Maclaren, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 169.

Chap. vi., vers. 8-10.

I. THIS, in all seeming, was the thankless office to which Isaiah was called, to be heard, to be listened to, by some with contempt, by others with seeming respect, and to leave things in the main worse than he found them. His office was towards those, in part at least, who were ever hearing, never doing, and so never understanding. The more they heard and saw, the farther they were from understanding, from being converted, from the reach of healing. And what said the prophet? Contrary as the sentence must have been to all the yearnings

of his soul, crushing to his hopes, he knew that it must be just, because "the Judge of the whole world" must do right. He intercedes, but only by these three words: "Lord, how long?" This question implied a hope that there would be an end; the answer "until" implied that there would be an end.

II. Where there is desolation for the sake of God, there is also consolation. Isaiah had not seen the Beatific Vision. Not with his bodily eyes did he behold God, nor with his bodily ears did he hear His words; but to his inward sight did God disclose some likeness, whereby he should understand the nature of the Divine Essence, how God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in-exists in Himself; although the Beatific Vision, as He is, was reserved for the life to come. So God prepared him to be—above all others, even of the goodly company of the prophets—the evangelic prophet, in that he had seen the glory of the Lord. This, then, is ever his consolation, this his joy in trouble, this his life in death. The surges of this world, higher and higher as they rose, only bore his soul upward toward his God. He, too, was a man of longing. In the darkness of the world God ever brings this light before him,—his darkest visions are the dawn-streaks of the brightest light. E. B. PUSEY, *Lenten Sermons*, p. 466.

REFERENCES: vi. 8-13.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol ii., p. 217. vi. 9.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 48. vi. 9, 10.—M. Nicholson, *Redeeming the Time*, p. 125; E. W. Shalders, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. vii., p. 471. vi. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 121. vi.—P. Thomson, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. xi., p. 119. vii. 6.—E. H. Plumptre, *Ibid.*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 236. vii. 9.—I. Williams, *Sermons on the Epistles and Gospels*, vol. ii., p. 353.

Chap. vii., vers. 10-14.—"Moreover the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above," etc.

I. ISAIAH is desired to offer Ahaz a sign either in the depth or the height. That the Jewish economy was in some sense an economy of signs we all admit. The Jewish prophet was to call the attention of his countrymen to these signs, to discover the signification of them. Our Lord laid down the whole doctrine upon this subject when the Pharisees sought a sign from Him. He had given them signs of healing, life-giving power proofs, that a present God was with them. But they wanted a sign from heaven, the token of some distant God in the sky. That, He said, was the craving of an adulterous or sense-bound generation; and He asked them whether there

were not signs in the sky at morning and evening by which they determined whether there would be a fine or cloudy day on the morrow, and whether there were not signs of the times which were warning them of evils to come. The new world has been just as rich in these signs as the old. If we do not use these, we may have others; but it will be because we are an adulterous and sinful generation, and need the portents and presages of an approaching downfall.

II. Ahaz said, "I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord my God." It was a hypocritical phrase; he did not fear to tempt the Lord his God; he did not believe Him. He feared lest the God of his fathers should do him some injury. "O house of David," said Isaiah, "is it not enough for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also?" Do you think you can change His purposes because you are incredulous and heartless? No; the Lord Himself shall give you a sign: "A Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

III. From this time we may observe a continual recurrence of these two ideas,—frequently in direct conjunction, always following close upon each other,—the Assyrian invader, and the Immanuel, God with us. Isaiah speaks of himself and the children whom God has given him; all these were to be living signs, continual testimonies of an impending ruin and of a great Deliverer, of One to whom every Israelite might turn with his heart, and in whom he might find rest and salvation; but whose presence would stir up all the dark and evil and rebellious thoughts of those who would not yield themselves to Him.

F. D. MAURICE, *Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament*, p. 235.

REFERENCES: vii. 10-14.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 139. vii. 14.—*Ibid.*, vol. iv., p. 89, and vol. ix., p. 336; *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. x., p. 331; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 1st series, p 96; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 360; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. ix., p. 91. vii. 16.—E. H. Plumptre, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 239. viii. 6.—S. Cox, *Ibid.*, 1st series, vol. vi., p. 353. viii. 7, 8.—E. H. Plumptre, *Ibid.*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 240.

Chap. viii., vers. 13, 14.—"Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread. And He shall be for a sanctuary."

I. THE whole subject of Godhead is one of awe, and if of

awe, then "dread." The more you know of God, the more you feel the unfathomableness of the mystery of Godhead. And all mystery is awe. It is a rule of our being, that we must tremble when we stand on the margin of the unknown. Therefore they who know most of God will most "fear," not His anger, but simply His amazing greatness.

II. The sense of mercy and benefits heaped upon us has an overwhelming influence upon the mind. Do not you know what it is to tremble at a danger when you have escaped it, much more than you did when you encountered it? That is exactly the "fear" and the "dread" of a pardoned sinner. It is the contemplation of a thunder-cloud which has rolled over your head.

III. Reverence is the great lesson which our age has to learn. Be suspicious of the love which is without awe. Remember that our best acquaintance with God only shows us more the immensity of the fields of thought which no mind can traverse.

IV. "He shall be for a sanctuary." Do you recoil at the idea of dreading God? That which makes the dread makes the hiding-place. To those who fear, He shall be for a sanctuary. (1) To a Jewish mind, the first idea of the sanctuary would be refuge. (2) The sanctuary of safety becomes the home of peace. "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." (3) God is the fountain of your holiness. The Shechinah shines within the veil; but as you become familiar with the precincts of that holy place, you catch some of its rays, and reflect its glory.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 9th series, p. 245.

REFERENCES: viii. 14.—W. M. Statham, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 131. viii. 16-ix. 7.—J. J. S. Perowne, *Sermons*, p. 365.

Chap. viii., ver. 17.—"And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him."

I. "I WILL wait upon the Lord." At all times we are to be like servants who are standing in the presence of their master, and who are ready, the very moment He shall give His orders, to go to any place, to do any work. If, when you should be waiting for what God may call you to do, you are so taken up with your own worldly concerns that you cannot hear, what then? Will that be waiting upon the Lord? And see what is the promise attached to this. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength"—that is, whatever He calls them

to do, they shall have strength, time after time, to carry it on; the more work He gives them, the more power will He give them to do it with.

II. "That hideth His face from the house of Jacob." The house of Jacob means the Church militant; the house of Israel, the Church in heaven. When it seems as if we could not stand against temptation, when there is some besetting sin which overthrows us again and again, then it seems as if God were hiding His face from us. And David might well say, "Thou didst hide Thy face from me, and I was troubled." For then we are troubled indeed: when we have to cry out, "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in, even unto my soul." And what are we to do then? The text tells us—we are to wait.

III. Of all difficult things, waiting is the most difficult. If we may only *do* something, if we may only exert ourselves, then it is so much easier, then we seem so much more content. Only be willing to wait; only fix your eyes on that cross where Christ hung, as the poor Israelite bitten by the fiery serpent looked with his whole might on the serpent of brass, and then the time shall come when you will see Him indeed.

J. M. NEALE, *Sermons in Sackville College Chapel*, vol. i., p. 4.

Chap. viii., ver. 18.—"The children whom the Lord hath given me."

THESE words may be resolved into four:—Be faithful; be tender; pray and hope.

I. *Faithfulness.* Always when we try to do good to others we are thrown back upon ourselves; we are reminded that high work must have fit instruments, and that our influence is likely to be as our character is. This is peculiarly the case as between us and our children. They know us much better than others; are much nearer to us, see us more clearly. They will know inevitably whether we mean all we say, desire all we pray for, and are all we profess. We must love Christ dearly ourselves if we are to show His loveliness to them. This sincerity on our part ought to take as one of its forms a firm, steady family rule, an exercise of wise parental authority. Be ruler in your own house, not by checks and shocks, by pull and strain, by collision of wills and trial of strengths; but gently, as the moon draws the tides up the shores, or as the sun lifts the ocean exhalations into the rain-clouds of the sky.

II. *Tenderness.* Here is ground where one almost fears to tread. Think of the great interests at stake; of the principles now being formed; of the habits that will result from them; of

the characters you are moulding; of the gladness or the grief, the light or the dark, that will be in future homes the result of what you are doing now in yours; and of the issues to be revealed in the eternal world: and walk tenderly, as you would among flowers in early spring.

III. Such feelings will lead to *prayer*. In prayer for our children we are putting ourselves in the line of God's laws. We work as He works. Our nurture of our children is soon over. His nurture never ends. They are children in His hands all their days, and we do well to cast them on their Father's care, on the tenderness of His nurture and wisdom of His admonition.

IV. *Hopefulness*. We ought to cherish a feeling of cheerful confidence in God as to the result of our endeavours for our children's good. Surely if there is a field in all the world where we may look with confidence to the springing of the seed sown in faith, that field is the Christian family. If promises are fulfilled anywhere, they will be fulfilled there.

A. RALEIGH, *From Dawn to the Perfect Day*, p. 34.

REFERENCES: viii. 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1194. viii. 19.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 318. viii. 19, 20.—W. J. Friel. *Penny Pulpit*, No. 468. viii. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 172, ix. 1-7.—F. D. Maurice, *Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament*, p. 254. ix. 1-8.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 333.

Chap. ix., ver. 2.—"They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."

I. ONE almost invariable sight revealed to us in the shadow of death is the imperishableness of the past. There is good in this revision of the past. (1) It is good to know that the past as much as the present is real; that our deeds lie there, imperishable, dormant, but not dead; that we cannot hide from them when they awake, nor put them away from our lives. (2) The remaining hours of our time here are more likely to be encountered and occupied with serious hearts. (3) Nothing more disposes us to listen to the offers of Divine mercy, than a clear unambiguous view of the actual past of our lives.

II. Another and more important sight vouchsafed to us in serious illness is the sight of the world we live in dwarfed to its true proportions. This is a great sight. It is gain to a man's soul, even when no bodily betterness can take place. It is actual light to him in the land of the shadow. For if the cares and anxieties of our daily duties be disproportionate, if

the great mass of them be nothing more real than shadows, it is better that we should know it here, than that we should pass deceived and deluded into the presence of Him from whose face all shadows flee away.

III. A third experience in serious illness is, that away from the resurrection of Christ there is no light for the world to come. We are bereft of human light. Our friendships do not help us here; our books wave farewell to us. The light they once brought to us twinkles behind us like street lights on a gradually receding shore; and the conviction comes nearer and clearer to our heart that the one light for the shadow, the light which alone can reveal the future, is the light which burns without consuming in the resurrection of our Lord.

IV. The next experience is the loneliness of suffering. This loneliness is the shadow sent to bring us home. God is our home. In Him, now and here, we live and move. The shadow separates us from our earthly home—puts friend and companion far from us; but it is, eventually, to bring us closer to our home in Him.

V. To the children of God affliction is in every way a good. Its shadow is a retirement for renewed and deeper insight into the character and purposes of their Father.

A. MACLEOD, *Days of Heaven upon Earth*, p. 262.

REFERENCES: ix. 3.—F. J. Austin, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 137; J. Pulsford, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 233; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 155; H. Thompson, *Concionalia: Outlines for Parochial Use*, 2nd series, p. 14; T. C. Finlayson, *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 523. ix. 4.—E. H. Plumptre, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 63; S. Cox, *Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 410. ix. 5.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 184.

Chap. ix., ver. 6.—"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given."

I. THERE is no such thing as an insignificant birth. All births are intense with meaning. Each has in it the splendour of immortal powers, and each of them is luminous with the unquenchable spark whose flames will burn with increasing brilliancy through the eternities. No birth is insignificant, but births differ in the quality and degree of their emphasis. There are births which are like the introduction of new forces and energies into human society, which pour the current of their power down through the ages with ever-widening and deepening volume.

II. Our commemoration to-day* is of the birth of a man, not

* Christmas Day.

the promulgation of a system, or the inauguration of a faith in a mere religion. Religions there were before the Christ was born. Systems of truth there were, out of which governments and civilisations sprang. But up to the time that Christ was born, up to the time that Divinity became incarnate, and the amiable elements of the Divine disposition entered into and animated flesh and blood, the world had lacked a man perfect in holiness, distinguished in the wisdom which inherent righteousness can alone bring to human ability, and pre-eminent in those affections and amiable instincts which in themselves are a revelation of the fatherhood of God. Humanity did not need a new religion; it needed a Divine presence.

III. We must remember (1) that Christ was greater than any truth He ever uttered. We must study Him through His words and His deeds, if we would receive the glorious impression which his purity and virtue and goodness are calculated to make upon us. (2) That we celebrate the birth of a man with universal connections. His little family did not absorb Him. He was not the Son of Mary and Joseph, He was the Son of humanity.

III. At the birth of Christ the world began to live a new life, because the saving grace of perfect conduct of a saintly spirit and of an atoning death had been given it. Religions were translated out of words into life, out of speech into spirit, out of books into manhood, out of the intellect into the untaught and the unteachable impulses of the soul.

W. H. MURRAY, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 146.

Chap. ix., ver. 6.—"His name shall be called Wonderful."

THE Incarnation and the secret of believing it.

I. Our nature shrinks from the imagination of Deity existing in solitude. Suppose that self-manifestation is a property of the Divine nature, as essential to its perfection as wisdom or love, then He in whom that manifestation is made, to whom God communicates His nature as the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, must be co-eternal with Him. From the beginning the Word was with God.

II. There is nothing absurd in the idea of such a union of two natures in the person of our Lord. Each of us also is possessed of two natures—a corporeal and a spiritual. There is as much inexplicable mystery in the union of these two natures in the humblest human being, as there is in the union of a Divine and a human nature in the person of Christ.

III. Suppose that at some meeting of citizens, publicly convened for deliberation, an individual, abject in mien and poor in apparel, should present himself for our notice; and that, when he proceeded to address us in language of serious admonition, we resented what we reckoned his presumption, repressed him, and turned him out with abuse,—our conduct would be not a little censurable, as a breach of the great law of the fraternity of all men, and a violation of the rights of citizenship. Well, we have expelled him from our assembly; but there he is back, with the crown of Britain on his head. How much more criminal it would be to treat him with indignity now. His flesh is now the flesh of a king; it is sacred: touch it not for harm; protect it with loyal care. The Divine nature of Christ was a crown to His human nature; not changing that human, so as to render it essentially different from ours, but giving it official pre-eminence—royalising it. (1) What must sin be in the judgment of Heaven, that, when He who was crowned with the diadem of Godhead presented Himself on our behalf, His substitution was not refused as if it had been exorbitant to ask so much? (2) Does the kingly crown save the king from feeling like other men? The crown which Jesus wore saved Him no pain, no pang, by which His brethren are afflicted. He felt as keenly as we feel—even more keenly; for in mental suffering, at least, the nature, being more refined, is necessarily more sensitive, in proportion as it is sinless.

W. Anderson, *Discourses*, p. 33.

I. We have here the great mystery of the Incarnation. "Unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given." "Unto us a Child is born" relates, we may safely say, to the humanity of Christ. "To us a Son is given" relates to the Divine nature of Christ. He was a Son when born, even the Eternal Son of God.

II. "The government shall be upon His shoulder." He is a King then; born for kingly office, and with kingly power. For one who shrinks from Christ, through dislike of the cross, there are hundreds who shrink from Him through dislike of the throne. The hard sentence to flesh and blood is not "The world's iniquity was laid upon His head," but "The world's government is laid upon His shoulder." Christ is King, and He reigns, whether to reward the loyal, or to punish the rebellious.

III. "Wonderful." This is the first title which the prophetic herald assigns to the new-born Prince. Wonderful in His actions, for look at His miracles; wonderful in His endurances,

for contemplate His sufferings; wonderful in life, for who shall declare His generation? wonderful in death, for He saw no corruption; wonderful in His resurrection, for He raised Himself; wonderful in ascension, for He carried our fallen nature into heavenly places; wonderful in the love which moved Him to do and to suffer for sinful beings like ourselves.

IV. Next He is called "Counsellor." Not our Counsellor, as though the office were one limited to the children of men, but Counsellor in the abstract; denoting, it may be, His intimate union in the Divine essence, as a Person in the Godhead, and as such concerned in all the counsels of eternity.

V. "The Everlasting Father." The Septuagint Version renders this title, "The Father of the world to come." "The world to come" was an expression, under the old dispensation, for the new dispensation that was promised and expected. We may consider this title as indicating in Christ the Source or Author of those eternal blessings, which are now proffered to and provided for the believing.

VI. "The Prince of Peace." "On earth peace, goodwill toward men" was the chorus with which the hosts of heaven rang in the birthday morn. Christ came to give peace to troubled consciences. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2282.

I. CONSIDER, first, who is the Son given, and what is His purpose. It is our Lord Jesus Christ. The verse begins with His humanity; and, mounting upwards, it rises to the height of His divinity. The prophet conducts us to Bethlehem and its stable, to the desert and its hunger, to the well and its thirst, to the workshop and its daily toil, to the sea and its midnight storm, to Gethsemane and its bloody sweat, to Calvary and its ignominious death, and all along that thorny path that stretched from the manger to the cross; for in announcing the birth and coming of this Son and Child, he included in that announcement the noble purposes for which He was born—His work, His sufferings, His life, His death, all the grand ends for which the Son was given and the Child was born.

II. By whom was this Son given? By His Father. Man has his remedies, but they are always behindhand. The disease antedates the cure. But before the occasion came God was ready. Redemption was planned in the councils of eternity, and Satan's defeat secured before his first victory was won. The

Son gave Himself, but the Father gave Him; and there is no greater mistake than to regard God as looking on at redemption as a mere spectator, to approve the sacrifice and applaud the actor. God's love was the root, Christ's death the fruit.

III. To whom was He given? He was given to us. "*Unto us* a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." "God commendeth His love to us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

T. GUTHRIE, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 174.

I. LOOK first at some of the characteristics of Christ's wonderfulness. (1) It must be evident that this wonderfulness is essential to His being and continuing the centre of interest for men. If He is to be the great world-power, He must be always the unquestionable world-wonder. He must arrest and compel attention. Whatever novelties appear He must eclipse them. He must always make the freshest appeal to the heart and soul of man. For wonder is that which rouses men. It is the token in us of the boundlessness of the universe and the infinitude of God. Wonder is the presage of endless progress and its stimulus. It throws a glory and freshness over existence. It makes all things new. Therefore He who is to dominate the world, save it, and fill it with heavenly life through all the ages must be the enduring unapproachable wonder. (2) No one can at all appreciate the wonderfulness of Christ who does not consider its freedom from the merely marvellous. It has a meaning and a power prior to that and above it. It is not simply this notable absence that impresses us, but the positive atmosphere of soberness. There is everywhere an air of sagacity, prudence, balance, insight, common sense. (3) The different wonders of Christ's nature and work form together a unity. Each fits into the others, and the very things which, taken apart, give rise to the greatest perplexity, are found to be the main uniting elements. We accept each because of the all, and the all because of each, and cry out, My Lord and my God.

II. The wonderfulness of Christ in its bearing on the wonderfulness of man and of God. (1) The wonderfulness of man. Man viewed in his nature and present condition is a transcendent and most painful wonder. The great objection that many in our time have to Christ is, that He is *too* wonderful. To this mood we present the marvel, the perplexing, terrible marvel, of man. Christ exactly meets this terrible marvel of man's condition. The one wonder stands over

against the other, and fits into it. (2) The wonderfulness of God. It is the wonderfulness of Christ which alone answers to the wonderfulness of God. God is infinite in all His attributes, —power, justice, wisdom, holiness. Christ is the splendour of love that irradiates all. His wonderfulness vindicates God and wins man.

J. Leckie, *Sermons Preached at Ibrox*, p. 229.

References: ix. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., Nos. 214, 215, vol. v., No. 258, vol. vi., No. 291, vol. xii., No. 724; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 279; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., pp. 275, 373; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 71; J. Keble, *Sermons from Christmas to Epiphany*, pp. 49, 79; Bishop Moorhouse, *The Expectation of the Christ*, p. 49; J. Edmond, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 145; W. Anderson, *Ibid.*, vol. x., p. 392; A. Mursell, *Ibid.*, vol. xxii., p. 299; D. Davies, *Ibid.*, vol. xxvi., p. 273; H. P. Liddon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 174; Bishop Walsham How, *Plain Words*, 2nd series, p. 20.

Chap. ix., vers. 6, 7.

In the time when the prophet Isaiah wrote this prophecy, everything round him was exactly opposite to his words. The king of Judea, his country, was not reigning in righteousness. He was an unrighteous and wicked governor. The weak and poor and needy had no one to right them, no one to take their part.

I. But Isaiah had God's Spirit with him; the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of holiness, righteousness, justice. And that Holy Spirit convinced him of sin and of righteousness and of judgment, as he convinces every man who gives himself up humbly to God's teaching. God's Spirit in his heart made him feel sure that, in some way or other, some day or other, the Lord God would come to judgment, to judge the wicked princes and rulers of this world, and cast them out. It must be so. God was a righteous God. He was not lazy or careless about this poor sinful world, and about all the sinful, down-trodden, ignorant men and women and children in it. He would take the matter into His own hands. If kings would not reign in righteousness, He would come and reign in righteousness Himself.

II. Isaiah saw all this but dimly, afar off. He perhaps thought at times that the good young prince Hezekiah—the might of God, as his name means—who was growing up in his day to be a deliverer, and a righteous king over the Jews, was to set the world right. Hezekiah failed to save the nation of the Jews. But still Isaiah's prophecy was true. "For

unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given;" even the Babe of Bethlehem, Jesus Christ the Lord. The government shall indeed be upon His shoulder; for it has been there always. His name is indeed Wonderful; for what more wondrous thing was ever seen in heaven or in earth than that great love with which He loved us? He is not merely the might of God, as Hezekiah was, for a sign and a prophecy; for He is the mighty God Himself. He is indeed the Counsellor; for He is the light that lighteth every man who comes into the world. He is the "Father of an everlasting age." He gives eternal peace to all who will accept it; peace which this world can neither give nor take away.

C. KINGSLEY, *Sermons on National Subjects*, 2nd series, p. 140.

Chap. ix., ver. 7.—**"Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever."**

WHEN Isaiah lived, that part of the world in which Judea was geographically situated, that is to say the eastern world, which was then the seat of civilisation, exhibited certain grand, imposing, and ancient kingdoms. How did Isaiah feel towards these kingdoms? and what was the place which they occupied in that scheme of things which he had in his mind by Divine teaching and inspiration? The answer to this question is given in almost every page of his prophetical writings. He regarded them as mere passing, temporary governments, destined to vanish and give way to a glorious kingdom which was one day to appear, founded upon totally different principles from those on which they were erected; a kingdom of peace under a Prince of Peace, or the Messiah, who was to collect all the nations of the earth round one centre, and bind them in bonds of harmony and love.

I. The great kingdoms then existing in the world were doubtless serviceable, under God's providence, in keeping up something like law and order amongst men. But they did this in the worst possible way in which it could be done, and only because, even for their own selfish purposes, it was necessary to do this. It was inflated and infatuated pride, combined with oppression, rapacity, and injustice, and total indifference to the rights of the weak and helpless, that Isaiah saw when he cast his eyes upon the great governments of the world of that day, upon the kingdoms of the East, to which he so constantly refers;

and with all this the kingdom of prophecy, that great future kingdom which forms the goal of prophetic vision, was to be in complete, marked, and utter contrast.

II. To a certain and very limited extent, we may allow that this prophecy of Isaiah has been fulfilled, and is fulfilled now. Under Christendom, certainly a great change has taken place in the government of the world, a great change has taken place in human society. There is a justice, a public spirit, a consideration for the mass of the people which was not known under these old governments. But no prophecy of the regeneration of human society is fulfilled in this world. The Christian Church does but foreshadow the real communion and society of the prophet's vision. The Gospel tells us when and where this kingdom will be; that it will be in another world when this has passed away.

J. B. MOZLEY, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 244.

Chap. ix., ver. 7.—"Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end."

I. GOVERNMENT comes before peace. First, authority must be established, and then quietude will follow; for tranquillity is the child of order. Christ is setting up government that He may establish peace. It is the secret of everything. If you look out on the wide area of the world, here is the cause of all the strange and painful processes,—the conflicts, the distress, the judgments, which you see around you—all to make government, absolute universal government. And then, and not till then, will come the peace of the whole earth.

II. To those who have learnt thus to connect government with peace, and who are jealous over their own hearts' outbreaks, it will be a pleasant thought that the government, if only you will let it, must increase. He who was born for this very end, to be the King of your heart, will not leave it till He has made that little province quite His own. There is "no end." That sweet subduing, that blessed ruling, will continue till there is not an affection that strays, nor a will that rebels,—and then the "peace."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 9th series, p. 232.

REFERENCES: ix. 10.—A. Scott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 230.

Chap. x., ver. 3.—"Where will ye leave your glory?"

WHAT the world's glory consists of is readily apprehended. That

a man be conspicuous among and above his fellow-mortals;—be a more important object, as if a larger measure of being, than a number of them estimated collectively;—be much observed, admired, even envied, as being that which they cannot be;—be often in people's thoughts and in their discourse. The man of glory is to be such a one, that it shall seem as if it were chiefly on his account that many other men and things exist.

I "Where will ye leave your glory?" What! then, it is to be left, the object of all this ardour and idolatry—all this anxiety and exertion—all this elation and pride,—is to be left. Men must leave their glory. (1) Where will they leave it, that it can in any sense continue to be theirs? (2) Where will they leave it, that it shall be anything to them? What becomes of it next? (3) Where will they leave their glory, to be kept that they may obtain it again?

II. Apply these remarks to several of the kinds, the forms, of this world's glory. (1) The material splendour of life; (2) riches; (3) elevated rank in society; (4) the possession of power; (5) martial glory; (6) intellectual glory. "Where will ye leave your glory?" Contrast with all these forms of folly the predominant aim of a Christian, which is "glory" still; but a glory which he will not have to leave, a glory accumulated for him in the world to which he is going.

J. FOSTER, *Lectures*, 2nd series, p. 40.

REFERENCES: x. 5.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 209. x. 20-23.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 43. xi. 1-9.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxiii., p. 281.

Chap. xi., ver. 2.—"The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."

THIS is Isaiah's description of the Spirit of Whitsuntide, the royal Spirit which was to descend, and did descend without measure, on the ideal and perfect King, even on Jesus Christ our Lord, the only-begotten Son of God.

I. That Spirit is the Spirit of God, and therefore the Spirit of Christ. He is the Spirit of love. For God is love, and He is the Spirit of God. But the text describes Him as the Spirit of wisdom. Experience will show us that the Spirit of love is the same as the Spirit of wisdom; that if any man wishes to be truly wise and prudent, his best way—I may say his only way—is to be loving and charitable.

II. The text describes the Spirit as the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, *i.e.* as the knowledge of human nature, the understanding of men and their ways. If we do not understand our fellow-creatures, we shall never love them. But it is equally true that if we do not love them, we shall never understand them. Want of charity, want of sympathy, want of good-feeling and fellow-feeling,—what does it, what can it, breed but endless mistakes and ignorances, both of men's characters and men's circumstances?

III. This royal Spirit is described as the Spirit of counsel and might, that is, the Spirit of prudence and practical power; the Spirit which sees how to deal with human beings, and has the practical power of making them obey. Now that power, again, can only be got by loving human beings. There is nothing so blind as hardness, nothing so weak as violence.

IV. This Spirit is also "the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." They, indeed, both begin in love and end in love. (1) If you wish for knowledge, you must begin by loving knowledge for its own sake. And if this be true of things earthly and temporal, how much more of things heavenly and eternal? We must begin by loving them with a sort of child's love, without understanding them; by that simple instinct and longing after what is good and beautiful and true, which is indeed the inspiration of the Spirit of God. (2) The spirit of the fear of the Lord must be the spirit of love, not only to God, but to our fellow-creatures.

C. KINGSLEY, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 25.

REFERENCE: xi. 3.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 225.

Chap. xi., ver. 4.—"With righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked."

As it may in many ways be shown that the Church of Christ, though one Church with the Jewish, differs from it as being a kingdom, so now let me dwell on this point: that though a kingdom like empires of the earth, it differs from them in being a Church, *i.e.* a kingdom of truth and righteousness. That Scripture speaks of the kingdom of Christ as not an earthly kingdom, not supported by strength of arm or force of mind, or any other faculty or gift of the natural man, is plain. But consider some objections to which the circumstances of its actual history and condition give rise.

I. It may be said that the event has not fulfilled the prophecies; that the kingdom has indeed been large and powerful, but it has not ruled according to justice and truth; that at times it has had very wicked men among its rulers, and that great corruptions, religious and moral, have been found in it; and that, as has sometimes been said, worse crimes have been perpetrated under colour of religion than in any other way. But this may be granted in the argument; yet the Scripture account of the Church remains uncompromised. It is a kingdom of righteousness, because it is a kingdom *founded, based,* in righteousness.

II. In the Gospel, Christ's followers are represented as poor, despised, weak, and helpless,—such pre-eminently were the Apostles. But in the Prophets, especially in Isaiah, the kingdom is represented as rich and flourishing and honoured, and powerful and happy. If the Church of Christ were to seek power, wealth, and honour, this were to fall from grace; but it is not less true that she will have them, though she seeks them not—or rather, if she seeks them not. Such is the law of Christ's kingdom, such the paradox which is seen in its history. It belongs to the poor in spirit; it belongs to the persecuted; it is possessed by the meek; it is sustained by the patient. It conquers by suffering; it advances by retiring; it is made wise through foolishness.

III. Temporal power and wealth, though not essential to the Church, are almost necessary attendants on it. They cannot be long absent from it; it is but a matter of time, as we speak, when they will be added.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day*, p. 237.

Chap. xi., ver. 6.—"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them."

IT is plain, from the words of the text, that Isaiah was one of those prophets and righteous men who desired to see and hear the things which Christ's disciples saw and heard. But it may be said that he desired to see the kingdom of Christ, because he thought that it would bring with it a greater and happier change in the state of the world than it has done; because he looked forward to it as to a time when the wolf should dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid—that is, when there should be nothing but peace and comfort everywhere. What, then, are we to think of such passages as those in my text? The question deserves to be answered, because

unless we understand it we must read very great portions of the books of the prophets with no benefit; and it may be useful also in order to find out whether there be not more reality of happiness in the Gospel than we are commonly inclined to give it credit for.

I. The Gospel makes a man industrious, sober, and careful of his time; which no one, I suppose, would deny to be three great benefits. It is the great excellence of the Gospel, that it furnishes us with the strongest of all helps to overcome temptation,—the fear of God and the hope of reward, at first; and afterwards, as the Spirit of Christ changes us more and more into Christ's image, it really makes us lose our relish for what is bad; so that, at last, there is much less temptation to overcome.

II. The Gospel makes us care as much as we ought, and no more, for the things of this life; for worldly cares or sorrows, or prospects of gain or loss, of honour or disgrace. He who went through life as a Christian, learning to look at the world from the beginning with a Christian's eye, would find himself strong in the strength of Christ to bear whatever was laid upon him, and would say with the Apostle, in perfect sincerity, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us."

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 47.

REFERENCES: xi. 6.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 188; J. H. Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 9.

Chap. xi., ver. 9.—"The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

I. MOST exactly have the figures which the Holy Spirit condescended to apply to Himself been fulfilled in the course of the dispensation; nay, even to this day. His operation has been calm, equable, gradual, far-spreading, overtaking, intimate, irresistible. What is so awfully silent, so mighty, so inevitable, so encompassing as a flood of water? Such was the power of the Spirit in the beginning, when He vouchsafed to descend as an invisible wind, as an outpoured flood. Thus He changed the whole face of the world. The ark of God moved upon the face of the waters.

II. And what the power of the Spirit has been in the world at large, that it is also in every human heart to which it comes. (1) Any spirit which professes to come to us alone, and not to others, which makes no claim of having moved the body of the

Church at all times and places, is not of God, but a private spirit of error. (2) Vehemence, tumult, confusion, are no attributes of that benignant flood with which God has replenished the earth. That flood of grace is sedate, majestic, gentle in its operation. (3) The Divine Baptism, wherewith God visits us, penetrates through our whole soul and body. It leaves no part of us uncleansed, unsanctified. It claims the whole man for God. Any spirit which is content with what is short of this, which does not lead us to utter self-surrender and devotion, is not from God.

III. The heart of every Christian ought to represent in miniature the Catholic Church, since one Spirit makes both the whole Church and every member of it to be His temple. As He makes the Church one, which, left to itself, would separate into many parts, so He makes the soul one, in spite of its various affections and faculties, and its contradictory aims.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day*, p. 126.

REFERENCES: xi. 9.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 226; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 145.

Chap. xi., ver. 10.—"In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand as an ensign of the people."

I. "THERE shall be a root of Jesse," *i.e.* a thrifty scion shall spring forth from that old decayed family. The prophet does not represent our Saviour as a stately and luxuriant tree, but as a sucker from an unpromising and apparently dead root.

II. The prophet goes on to portray His glorious office: "He shall stand for an ensign of the people." It was customary, in olden time, during the continuance of a war, for the prince or commander to set up an ensign on a lofty tower or mountain top, and to summon the people to rally round it. So, also, was the Lord Jesus to be lifted up on the Cross, that He might draw all men unto Him, and through the faithful preaching of the Gospel to gather together into one great army the true children of God who are dispersed abroad. He stands as an ensign of the people, not merely to attract the eyes of all, and to fix them on Himself, but to warn them of the silent but sure approach of deadly foes, and to indicate the spot where weapons offensive and defensive may be obtained.

III. To this glorious ensign the prophet declares that "the Gentiles shall seek." When St. Paul quotes the verse (Rom. xv. 12) he varies the language by a single word. "In His name shall the Gentiles trust." There is no inconsistency

between this seeking and trusting. The one is the cause, the other the effect; or rather each, in turn, is both cause and effect. When we trust in Christ we seek Him; and when we seek Him we are sure to find how worthy He is of our confidence.

J. N. NORTON, *Golden Truths*, p. 11.

REFERENCES: xi. 10.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 274. xi. 12, 13.—H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 254. xii. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 928. xii. 1-3.—R. M. McCheyne, *Additional Remains*, p. 217.

Chap. xii., ver. 2.—"I will trust, and not be afraid."

NATURALLY any creature must be liable to fear. The finite nature, however exalted, must always feel itself transcended and surrounded by the infinite unknown. And *we* are manifestly far more liable to the inroads of fear than those creatures who are in their first and proper position—who have never fallen.

I. The great mysteries of existence have a tendency to produce fear. (1) Has not every thoughtful mind bowed and almost trembled before the great mystery into which so many others may be resolved—the existence of evil, sin, misery, in the universe, under the government of an infinitely powerful and infinitely benevolent Being? (2) There is great mystery also about the plan of Divine providence in this world. Where is your relief? Will you seek to vanquish nature and providence by thought? Will you enter into the penetralia of their mysteries, and look into the very fountain and cause of all their operations? They will drop the darkness around you, and the light of your understanding will but glimmer like a feeble taper amid the mists of a starless night. Will you be wiser and trust? Ah, that is relief at last! "I will trust, and not be afraid." To God there is no mystery, no miscalculation, no loss. He is reaping perpetual harvest, gathering the wheat into His garner, linking on the sorrowful present to the glad future.

II. There are certain possibilities, the thought of which has a tendency to darken the spirit with fear. (1) We all look forward, we all struggle on to the future with more or less of expectation or desire. But our fears go with our hopes, our apprehensions keep close company with our anticipations. In proportion as men *have* suffered, they feel that there is a possibility of suffering being continued or renewed in coming days. Through the fear, not of death alone, but of a multitude

of other things, some are "all their life subject to bondage." Now, what is the remedy? "I will trust, and not be afraid." Faith leans upon the Lord. He knows our walking through this great wilderness.

III. There is yet one dread possibility, the contemplation of which is more appalling than the very worst of earthly calamities—the possibility of spiritual failure, ending in a final exclusion from the presence of God and the joys of the blessed. Here, again, as in the other instances, there is but one way of grappling with and overcoming this great fear. There it stands—a dread possibility, which cannot be ended by skill, nor conquered by strength; which can only be surmounted and vanquished by the principle of a self-renouncing faith,—"I will trust, and not be afraid."

A. RALEIGH, *The Way to the City*, p. 364.

Chap. xii., ver. 3.—"With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

I. CONSIDER what we have to understand by the wells of salvation. We shall not strain the prophet's meaning here, if we take salvation almost in the fully developed New Testament sense, as including negatively the deliverance from all evil, both evil of sin and evil of sorrow, and positively the endowment with all good, good both of holiness and happiness, which God can bestow or men receive. Then if so, God Himself is, in the deepest truth, the Well of Salvation. The figure of the text does not point to a well so much as to a spring. It is a source, not a reservoir. All the springs from which salvation, in any measure and in any form, flow to the thirsty lips of men are in God Himself. For men, Jesus Christ is as the river which flows from the closed and land-locked sea of the infinite, Divine nature. He is for us the only source, the inexhaustible source, the perennial source. "They drank of that Rock which followed them, and that Rock was Christ."

II. Consider what is the way of drawing from the wells of salvation. Christ has taught us what "drawing" is. To the Samaritan woman He said, "Thou wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." So, then, drawing is asking. To the crowds in the Temple courts He said, "Let him come unto Me, and drink." So, then, drawing is coming. To the listeners by the Sea of Galilee He said, "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." So coming, asking, drawing, are all

explained by believing. Simple faith draws all God's goodness into the soul.

III. Consider the joy of the water-drawers. The well is the meeting-place in these hot lands, where the solitary shepherds from the pastures and the maidens from the black camel's-hair tents meet in the cool evening, and ringing laughter and cheery talk go round. So jubilant is the heart of the man whose soul is filled and feasted with the God of his salvation, and the salvation of his God.

A. MACLAREN, *The Secret of Power*, p. 212 (see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 408).

REFERENCES: xii. 3.—*Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 188; H. Allen, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1676; J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages from the Prophets*, vol. i., p. 23; A. Maclaren, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 176.

Chap. xiii., ver. 12.—"I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir."

I. THE text is a promise in the guise of a threat. It is a threat to one nation, but a promise to mankind. The text is speaking of the devastation of war; men shall be so scarce that gold itself shall lose its preciousness. The overthrow of a nation is predicted here; the destruction of the mighty Babylonian empire. In that contempt of man, which at the first her pride and lust of possession revealed, was hidden Babylon's doom. The nation so lavish of human life was to die utterly out; the empire which sets no value on men for lack of men shall perish.

II. Our text is prophetic of the doom and discipline of the exclusive spirit. "God-like isolation" is an inhuman thing; nay, isolation is not God-like, for God is love. It is the Divine in man to which the prophecy of our text is spoken. To man, as to God, there is naught on earth so precious and so dear as man.

III. How wonderful is the fulfilment of our text in the Gospel! The doctrine of a common redemption has awakened in the Christian consciousness the sense of a vast human kin, unfavoured, unblessed, left to themselves, like sheep not having a shepherd. It is the worth of lost humanity which is revealed to us in the redemption by Christ, and which the Gospel will not let us forget. Christ welcomed the forgotten people, the wretched, the neglected, the sin-stricken, to Himself, and forced them into the society of His people. He calls them His own;

He says that to forget them is to forget Himself. He has opened the eyes of His followers by touching their hearts.

A. MACKENNAL, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 248.

Chap. xiv., ver. 32.—"The Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it."

"THE Lord hath founded Zion;" this is the guarantee of His love and her stability. "The poor of her people shall trust in it"—or, as the margin has it, shall betake themselves unto it—this is one purpose of the Church's mission upon earth,—the care, the teaching, the education, the guidance of the poor.

I. The strongest, most fundamental title of protection is creation. Even among ourselves, no one frames an object to destroy it; he who makes, makes that he may preserve. And if this be so in human nature, shall there be nothing to compare with it in the Divine? God, indeed, who is eternal, can require no successor to whom to devise His purposes of love; but all the claims that the thing framed can have on Him who framed it, hold with tenfold force when the object is not, as in our humbler works, the mere apposition of pre-existing materials, in which nothing is ours except the order of arrangement, but is itself, alike in matter and in form, the direct offspring of His own inexhaustible power and goodness. (1) Behold, then, how as His own "God loved the world;" how as not only His own, but His own in pain and anguish, and endeared to His inmost heart as such, God hath loved His Church. He spoke to bid the one, He died to make the other, exist. (2) In this Church of His is His own *honour* pledged. He hath not covenanted with the world that now is to immortalise it; but He has passed His own word for the perpetuity of His Church. Nothing so framed was ever framed to perish; He has infused into it His own Spirit, and His Spirit is life. (3) Is not the Church in its ultimate perfection set forth as the very reward of all the sorrows of its Lord? and shall He be defrauded of His recompense? (4) There is more than creation to bind the Church to Christ, more than promise, more than reward; there is communion, oneness, identification. A man may desert his child; he cannot desert himself. With such a union there can be no separation; if Christ be immortal, the Church is so; when He dies she shall perish, but not till then.

II. The text predicts that this Zion of God shall be the resort of His poor, and the object of their trust. The Church of Christ

is one vast institute for the benefit of the poor. He who loved all, eminently loved them, and His Church has ever, even in her darkest days, retained much of the character He thus impressed.

W. Archer Butler, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, 2nd series, p. 227.

At first sight the prediction which closes the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah seems of temporary interest only, and to speak of judgments which within a very few years were destined to fall upon one of the most inveterate enemies of God's ancient people; and yet I cannot but think those commentators right who, following the opinion of divers of the Fathers of the Church, have found in the passage an allusion to the Gospel and Church of Christ.

I. That the prophecy would be one of pressing and immediate interest to the contemporaries of the prophet is obvious from the manner in which it is ushered in: "In the year that king Ahaz died was this burden" (or, as we should nowadays say, this denunciation of wrath) against the Philistines. After bidding the inhabitants of Palestine howl for the judgments that were impending, Isaiah, speaking as he was moved by the Holy Ghost, makes the inquiry and gives the answer of the text. It was usual for neighbouring nations, who were friends and allies, to send ambassadors, and congratulate each other on success. When, therefore, the coming triumph over the Philistines should be known abroad, and the envoys of friendly states should inquire of Judah into the circumstances of his success, "Let this answer," said the prophet, "suffice: that the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it."

II. No one can read that promise and not feel that it was intended to have an ampler scope for its fulfilment than in the personal security of a handful of Jewish peasants; the whole turn of expression is redolent of Gospel times. Such words were never fully verified till Christ, the Son of David, had founded the Christian Church, and made His gracious offer to a world enslaved in the most cruel of all bondage: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

F. E. Paget, *Sermons for Special Occasions*, p. 65.

References: xiv. 10.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 178. xvi. 1.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages from the Prophets*, vol. i., pp. 35, 46. xvii. 10, 11.—A. Maclaren, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 179.

Chap. xviii., ver. 4.—"For so the Lord said unto me, I will take My rest, and I will consider in My dwelling-place like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest."

I. CONSIDER the characteristics of the Divine dwelling-place. God's works are not enough for Him. He dwells with His people. He takes delight in His people. God's chosen residence is a renewed nature; the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him, but the humble heart can. God dwells more really in the renewed soul than He could possibly in the curtained tabernacle or the shechinahed temple in days of old; and the music of the stringed instruments is poor compared with the melody the heart makes to God. To that celestial shrine neither man nor angel indeed can come; but Jesus can enter, and then, "The Lord said unto me, I will take my rest."

II. "I will consider." Exceeding sublime are all those passages in which the calm of the Divine mind is contrasted with the passion and the agitation of human affairs. We see here the perfect knowledge God has of the ways of His enemies.

III. See here the illustrations of Divine consideration, the loving and beautiful result. "Like a clear heat." There shall be impulse, not passion; growth, not force; light and life, not fury and blast. Happy they on whom the Lord thus rests, freshening and brightening; and if the Lord rests on us, if His hand is on us, we shall know it, for we shall be able to rest on Him.

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Sermons*, p. 438.

REFERENCES: xxi. 1-10.—S. Cox, *An Expositor's Note-book*, p. 183. xxi. 11.—W. M. Statham, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 193; H. J. Robjohns, *Ibid.*, vol. xiv., p. 152; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 219.

Chap. xxi., vers. 11, 12.—"He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return, come."

THE prophet appears to introduce himself as addressed in scorn by the people of the land which he is commissioned to warn. "Watchman, what of the night?" What new report of woe hast thou to unroll, thou who hast placed thyself as an authorised observer and censurer of our doings? But the prophetical watchman—the calm commissioner of heaven—replies, adopting their own languages, "Yes, the morning (the true morning of hope and peace) cometh, and also the night (the real and terrible night of God's vengeance): if ye will (if ye are in genuine earnest)

inquire, inquire. Obtain the knowledge you seek, the knowledge of the way of life; and acting on this knowledge, repent, and turn to the Lord your God."

I. Consider the question. (1) Some ask the report of the night with utter carelessness as to the reply. (2) Some ask in contempt. (3) Some ask it in horror and anguish of heart.

II. What is still the duty of him who holds the momentous position of watchman in the City of God? (1) He did not turn away from the question, in whatever spirit it was asked. (2) He uttered with equal assurance a threat and a promise. (3) He pressed the necessity of care in the study and earnest inquiry after the nature of the truth. (4) He summed up all by an anxious, a cordial, and a reiterated invitation to repentance and reconciliation with an offended but pardoning God. Thus, the single verse might be regarded as an abstract of the duties of the ministerial office. May God grant to His ministers a genuine desire to fulfil that office, to His people an equal anxiety to receive its labours.

W. Archer Butler, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, 2nd series, p. 342.

References: xxi. 11, 12.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 110; S. Cox, *Expositions*, 4th series, p. 336 (see also *An Expositor's Note-book*, p. 201). xxii. 23.—*Preacher's Lantern*, vol. ii., p. 429; J. N. Norton, *Every Sunday*, p. 45. xxiii. 4.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 390. xxiv. 1-6.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 212. xxv. 6.—*Pulpit Analyst*, vol. ii., p. 541.

Chap. xxiv., ver. 15.—"Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires."

The suffering child of God will "glorify Him in the fires."

I. By acknowledging His power.

II. By recognising His wisdom.

III. By a frank acknowledgment of His goodness.

J. N. Norton, *Golden Truths*, p. 17.

Religion very much consists in taking things out of their common places, and in removing them from a lower to a higher level. To a Christian, everything becomes great; everything has an eternity; everything owns God as its Author, and God as its final end and object. And to feel this, to recognise in everything its own inherent grandeur, to see in it the infinite and realise its vast capability, to trace it from its first real source, to hold it *in* God, to use it *for* God, to dedicate it *to* God,—this is consecration.

Consider how we may consecrate suffering.

I. To consecrate, the first thing must be, by one express, deliberate act, to dedicate the suffering. From the time this is done, you may call your pain, or your sorrow, not so much a suffering, as an offering; as much as if you laid it upon an actually material altar, it is an offering.

II. You will do well always to remember that the consecration of the little things in a trial is quite as important as the consecration of what at first sight appeared to be the greater things. A great cross, as men see it, is not generally the real cross; but the lesser cross which the great cross brings with it consecrates this.

III. Consecrate the uses of suffering, whatever those uses may be. All our sorrows and sufferings are available for others, and are intended as means for usefulness.

IV. Of all this consecration of suffering, the great exemplar is the Lord Jesus Christ. If you wish to know the way to consecrate, study Him. His aim is single to the Father's glory. Self is nowhere; love and service everywhere. "For the joy set before Him"—the joy of a glorified Church—"He endured the cross, despising the shame."

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 13th series, p. 85.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 15.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 275; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 319. xxiv. 23.—R. W. Evans *Parochial Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 83, vol. ii., p. 200. xxv. 3, 4.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages from the Prophets*, vol. i., p. 54.

Chap. xxv., ver. 4.—"A refuge from the storm."

I. THIS is a world where storms often gather, and tempests on this planet are never out of place. The storm has also its mission and its work as well as the calm. Now, among men, adversity of all kinds is a powerful agent in accomplishing necessary spiritual operations.

II. This is a time of storms, and tempests here are not out of season. The days of man upon earth are as the winter of his life. Death is the seed-time, and immortality is the spring and summer and harvest. When the spring and summer have come, snow and hail are out of season; but during the winter of our being—the days we spend upon earth—hail and snow and rain are in season.

III. Every storm, however, is raised and guided under the eye and hand of God. The stormy wind does not surprise Him, neither does it master Him; it only fulfils His decree; it simply accomplishes His word.

IV. The object of every storm is good, although the present experience of it is not joyous, but grievous; and hence the need of a refuge, even to the child of God. It is quite true that no storm can ultimately hurt him; but any storm may terribly disquiet him, if he have not a refuge in the storm, and if he make not full and complete use of that refuge. And where is the refuge? "God is a refuge for us."

V. A place to be a refuge must be out of the storm; or if in the midst of the storm, it must be stronger than the storm. God is a refuge from the storm—a refuge required by all, and resorted to by many, but in which there is always room—a refuge stronger than the concentrated force of all the storms which have ever raged—a refuge in which we may stay until all storms are over, and a refuge affording efficient shelter.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 4th series, No. 13.

REFERENCES: xxv. 6.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 139; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 846. xxv. 6-8.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages from the Prophets*, vol. i., p. 66. xxv. 7.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. iv., p. 331. xxv. 8, 9.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 279. xxv. 9.—H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 1; *Ibid.*, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 185; J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 6th series, p. 140; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 69; Bishop Walsham How, *Plain Words*, 2nd series, p. 10. xxvi. 3.—F. W. Farrar, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 955 (see also *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 187); Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1818; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 181; C. White, *Literary Churchman Sermons*, p. 181. xxvi. 4.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 188; *Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 87.

Chap. xxvi., ver. 9.—**"With my spirit within me will I seek Thee early: for when Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."**

I. THE Bible is pervaded by the teaching of events. Isaiah is the inspired writer who lays most stress on this teaching. He is full of a great fall which is to come some day to all human pride, of a great ruin in prospect. He writes with this vision always before his eyes, and this great distant judgment of the fall of the world colours his descriptions of intermediate lesser judgments and events. He looks upon everything from this point of view. Through all the overthrows of kings and armies, of cities and governments, of high towers and fenced walls, he hears the last trumpet sounding. He says that the end will come at last, and that in the meantime every catastrophe that takes place in the world is a type of it. Isaiah is thus

a teacher from events—from the course of things here. He tells men such events ought to make them sober and serious in spite of themselves—to chasten their vanity and levity, and to subdue their pride.

II. Persons are apt too much to separate spirituality of mind from the teaching of ordinary life, and the lessons which the facts of this world convey. Undoubtedly the mind may be spiritualised without this teaching, and even before it can be had; at the same time, in the case of the great majority of men, the spiritual temper is not attained without this teaching. What a moral is there, for instance, in the fall of a great man! It puts us into a spiritual state of mind; it makes us, whether we will or no, religious for a short interval. The world thus rightly read and rightly apprehended becomes its own antidote. The world is the great tempter, but at the same time it is the great monitor. It is the great saddener, the great warner, the great prophet.

J. B. MOZLEY, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 106.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i., No. 31. xxvi. 11. —*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 95. xxvi. 12.—H. Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 275. xxvi. 13.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 531.

Chap. xxvi., ver. 19.—"Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."

THIS passage is very mystical; and it may be a much higher than Isaiah who speaks; for "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," and then the words will contain the deepest evangelical meaning. "Thy dead men shall live," Christ says to His Church. And why? What are the means? How is the process? "Together with my dead body shall they arise."

I. Mark the great truth that argument contains. The natural body of the Lord Jesus Christ rose visible upon the earth; but that visible body was the symbol of another body, as real, but invisible. Of that body Christ is the head, and all His are members.

II. St. Peter tells us that the restored life of the buried body owes itself to the same source as that which is the spring in this world of the life of the dead soul. The Holy Ghost is made known to us in this as in other of His offices under the emblem of the dew.

III. It has been said, that the best test of a man's character is how he wakes up in the morning. What a chorus of sweet melodies will that be, when every saint who has slept awakes to sing! Then shall we know what that means—the "song of Moses and the Lamb."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 115.

REFERENCES: xxvi. 19.—J. N. Norton, *Old Paths*, p. 252; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 184. xxvi. 20.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages from the Prophets*, vol. i., p. 78. xxvi. 20, 21. —*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 355; H. P. Liddon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 186. xxvi.—Parker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxi., No. 168. xxvii. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1464. xxvii. 5. —*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 255.

Chap. xxvii., ver. 8.—"He stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind."

Two somewhat distinct meanings may be attached to these words. They may mean that two evil winds cannot blow in full force together. If they blow together, there is a chastening of the evil influence of both winds. Or the prophet may be referring to the same wind, by the words "rough wind" and "east wind," and he may mean simply to imply that every strong wind God restrains. Whichever view you take of the passage, the great truths presented by it are the same. The subject is the adaptation of trial to the state of those who are afflicted.

I. Sorrows are strong forces. They are winds; they act as winds; they are forces before which we bend and bow. (1) The wind acts upon the sapling or the young tree, and shaking it, it roots it. So do troubles act upon young Christians. (2) The wind acts upon ripe fruit, which hangs upon the boughs of the tree ready to fall, and which requires a slight mechanical force only, a mere touch, to bring it down. Thus it is with the fruits of the Spirit, and with all the produce of Divine training and heavenly discipline.

II. Sorrows have their appointed time. "In the day of the east wind." There is a time to mourn. Trouble does not come before its time, it does not come after its time; it comes in its season. They are here, and the day of their residence may be long; but every hour of that day tells of the day's approaching end, when the trouble will be no more.

III. Sorrows are God's servants. "He stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind," just because the winds are

His. Troubles are God's ministers; they are entirely under His control, and they do only His bidding. They are adapted to the state of those who are afflicted. (1) Adapted by whom? By the Almighty Father. (2) Adapted to what? To the strength of the sufferer, and to the work which has to be accomplished. (3) How does God do this? Sometimes by removing one trouble before another comes. Sometimes by lightening the affliction itself, or by so strengthening the heart of the sufferer, that the affliction is relatively lighter; or by pouring through the soul of the troubled one rich and abundant consolation. (4) For what purpose does God do this? He does it for present peace and for present joy. He would sooner see you laugh than cry, smile than weep. "He stayeth His rough wind in the day of the east wind" that there may be a restoration of the elasticity of the spirit.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 3rd series, No. 12.

REFERENCES: xxvii. 8.—*Preacher's Lantern*, vol. ii., p. 507; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 183. xxvii. 10.—*Ibid.*, p. 183. xxviii. 1-4.—*Ibid*, vol. iv., p. 314. xxviii. 5.—*Ibid.*, vol. iv., p. 138. xxviii. 5, 6.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages from the Prophets*, vol. i., p. 85. xxviii. 7-13.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. i., p. 98. xxviii. 9, 13.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 147. xxviii. 10.—*Preacher's Lantern*, vol. ii., p. 311. xxviii. 10. 13.—D. Fraser, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 975 (see also *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 189). xxviii. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1593. xxviii. 15.—Forsyth and Hamilton, *Pulpit Parables*, p. 158.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 16.—"He that believeth shall not make haste."

I. THE Christian thrives better from not being permitted to make haste in acquirements. This passage is directed against anything like hurry or bustle. It does not so much declare that the believer can never advance rapidly as that he shall never move with that agitated step which betokens insecurity. It does not denote a sluggish pace to be unavoidable; but simply implies that what is hasty and sudden will not be allowed. And a little reflection will convince us of the advantages of such an arrangement. It holds good in almost everything, that what is done hastily is seldom done well. There is a great deal of rough work in all matters of learning, which the scholar would gladly avoid; but there will be nothing substantial in it unless this natural inclination be carefully opposed. The case is just the same in regard to religion; there is a great deal of rough work here as well

as in languages or sciences. It is for the believer's advantage that he is not allowed to slur over this rough work. Take the experience of Christians, and you will find that where progress has been most rapid, the commencement has been most arduous. If the Christian have once been greatly humbled, emptied of self, and alarmed at the view of God's wrath against sin, he will never afterwards lose the feelings thus excited within him. They will accompany him; not to agitate him, but to admonish him; not to terrify, but to alarm.

II. Consider certain of the comforts and enjoyments which are ensured to the believer by the promise that he shall not make haste. (1) He has a protector always at hand, so that in seasons of emergency he need not run to and fro in search of succour. He has nothing to hasten from, for he is shielded against every assault. He has nothing to hasten to, for he is already enclosed within a rampart of security. (2) We speak of the advantages which result from what is called presence of mind. If the Christian but live up to the privileges which this promise includes, he will never know what it is to be scared by unexpected things, or hurried into injudicious. He can never be called upon for instant decision, so as to have no time for asking counsel of God. (3) Meekness and patience are included in the announcement of our text. It promises the believer that he shall be collected in the midst of danger, confident in the face of difficulties, hopeful in trial, happy in affliction, steadfast in death. "He that believeth shall not make haste."

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2061.

OUR day is one in which men, emphatically, "make haste." Hurry, bustle, drive, meet us at every turn. Of this state of things every one complains, but no one seems able to extricate himself from it. We are drawn into a vortex; it is useless to struggle; all we can do is to yield.

In the passage to which the text belongs, a contrast seems to be drawn between those persons who construct some refuge of their own to protect them from the ills of life, and those others who are willing to avail themselves of that well-built and well-founded House which the Lord God hath provided for them; and then the dismay and disappointment of the one party, when their expectations are found to deceive them, are contrasted with the calm security and confidence of the other. The idea of the text is, that if a man believes in God, and

trusts in God, and will consent to work on the lines which God has laid down, he will be saved from that restless, worldly agitation of mind which produces so frequently such calamitous results.

I. Notice how, in temporal matters, this desirable state of things will be brought about. Let a man believe thoroughly in God as one who rewards faithful labour, although He may not see fit to reward it at once, and that man will be kept from the perils into which a restless and unsettled agitation of mind would probably betray him. He can afford to be strong and patient, for he knows that the reward will come.

II. Turn from temporal to spiritual matters. (1) The man who "believeth" has not to run helplessly hither and thither, when a strain comes upon him, seeking for principles to sustain him in the hour of trial. He has got his principles, and they are ready for use. Restless agitation is not his, for his soul is centred and held in equipoise. (2) The man who believes in a living God will not be full of nervous apprehensions about the future of Christianity. Men may break themselves in pieces against the Rock of Ages, but the Rock itself will never move. "He that believeth shall not make haste."

G. CALTHROP, *Words Spoken to My Friends*, p. 136.

REFERENCES: xxviii. 16.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 277; J. G. Murphy, *Book of Daniel*, p. 62; H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2061; S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 38.

Chap. xxviii., ver. 17.—"Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies."

ALL men know themselves to be sinners against God. They know, also, that as sinners they are in peril and are not safe. Hence their anxiety to find some refuge for safety. They know they might find this in the way of forsaking sin and turning to the Lord; but they do not choose to forsake their sins. Hence there seems to be no convenient resource but to hide themselves under some refuge. Our text speaks of the "refuge of lies." Notice some of these refuges.

I. An unsanctifying hope of heaven. A good hope purifies the heart. But there certainly are hopes indulged that fail to purify the heart of those who hold them. Those hopes are worthless—a mere refuge of lies.

II. An old experience, that is all old, is a lie.

III. There are two forms of self-righteousness—the legal and

the Gospel—both of which are refuges of lies. The legal depends on duty-doing, evermore trying to work out salvation by deeds of law. The Gospel form sets itself to get grace by works. Men try to get a new heart, not by trying to turn from all sin, but by praying for it.

IV. Universalism is an old refuge of lies. It never saved any man from sin. It throws no influence in that direction.

V. God declares that "the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies." No doubt the hail is the symbol of God's displeasure. He loves truth too well to have the least sympathy with lies. He loves the souls of men too well to have any patience with agencies so destructive. Therefore, He loathes all these refuges of lies, and has solemnly declared that the hail shall sweep them all away.

VI. There is a refuge which is not one of lies. There is a hiding-place which no waters can reach to overwhelm. It lies far above their course. You need to come into such communion with Christ, that His power and presence and fulness shall flow through your heart fully and freely, and be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

C. G. FINNEY, *Sermons on Gospel Themes*, p. 119.

REFERENCES: xxviii. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1501. xxviii. 20.—W. H. Langhorne, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1030; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 244; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 67. xxviii. 23-29.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. i., p. 88. xxviii. 24-29.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 142. xxviii. 25.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1626. xxviii. 29.—*Ibid.*, vol. xii., No. 711.

Chap. xxix., ver. 8.—"It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty," etc.

THE general truth taught by these words is this: wrong-doing promises much, but it certainly ends in bitter disappointment. The good to be gained by sin is seen and tasted and handled only in dream. It is never actually possessed, and visible disappointment is the bitter fruit of transgression.

I. The very nature of sin suggests this fact. (1) Sin is a wandering from the way which God has appointed for us—the way which was in His mind when He made man—the only way which has ever been in His mind as the right way. There is no adaptation in man's real nature to any way but one, and that is obedience to a Father in heaven, the result and fruit of true love for that Father. (2) Sin is a practical withdrawing from

the protection of Divine providence. It thus wounds, sometimes instantly, and always eventually, the transgressor himself. It is as when a hungry man dreameth, and awaketh, and behold, he is faint.

II. Look at a few recognised facts about sin. (1) The angels who kept not their first estate left their own habitation. So far as we can understand the matter they sought freedom, but they found chains. They sought light; they found darkness. They sought happiness; they found misery,—as when a hungry man dreameth and eateth, and awaketh and finds himself famishing. (2) Our first parents, in yielding to the first temptation, sought equality with God; but they soon found themselves fallen below the natural human level. (3) The general history of sin is found in epitome in the life of every sinner. In families and churches and nations, in societies of all kinds, we see illustrated the truth that sin everywhere, by whomsoever committed, is the occasion of most bitter disappointment.

S. MARTIN, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 621.

Chap. xxix., vers. 11,'12.—"And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed," etc.

I. THERE is something of truth n the representation that the Bible is a sealed book. We always regard it as a standing proof of the Divine origin of the volume, that it is not to be unfolded by the processes which we apply to a merely human composition, and that every attempt to enter deeply into its meaning, without the assistance of its Author, issues in nothing but conjecture and confusion. The Bible is addressed to the heart, not merely to the head. Revelation is designed not only to convey to the intellect a few definite notions of things which its own sagacity is unable to discover, but to act upon the affections, and win them over to the service of God. The very fact that unless the Holy Spirit explains the Bible it is impossible for the student to enter into its meaning, may be seized on by those who seek an apology for neglect; and men may retort upon an adviser who says, "Read this, I pray you," by asking, "How can we, since on your own showing the book is sealed?" The Bible is a sealed book to all who interpret it by their own unaided strength. But "if any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." Hence the key is within reach.

You are taught how the flame may be kindled by which the seals shall be dissolved. Can it, then, be any justification for the neglect with which Scripture is treated that any of its statements overpass our unassisted comprehensions?

II. If one great body of men excuse themselves by pleading that the volume is sealed, another will take refuge in their own want of scholarship. Here, again, the excuse is based on a truth; but yet it in no degree justifies neglect. The well-educated man has undoubtedly advantages over the uneducated, when both are considered as students of Scripture. The poor may be deterred by positive inability from reading the Bible, and thus be dependent upon their children or neighbours for acquaintance with its chapters; and even where there has not been this total want of common instruction, and the poor cottager is able to read the Bible for himself, it is not to be questioned that he will find many difficulties which never meet the better educated. Here comes in with fresh force all our preceding argument in regard to the office of the Spirit as the interpreter of Scripture. If the understanding of the Bible, so as to become morally advantaged by its statements, depend on the influences of the Holy Ghost, it is clear that the learned may search much and gain no spiritual benefit, and the unlearned may read little and yet be mightily profited. The instant you ascertain that the book cannot be unsealed by mere human instrumentality, but that an agency is needed which is promised to all without exception who seek it by prayer, you place rich and poor on the same level, so far as "life eternal" is concerned, which is the knowing God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2129.

REFERENCES: xxix. 11, 12.—*Old Testament Outlines*, p. 191. xxix. 13.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 40. xxix. 13, 14.—*Pulpit Analyst*, vol. i., p. 207. xxix. 18.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 115. xxx. 1.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 103.

Chap. xxx., vers. 9, 10.—"This is a rebellious people, . . . which say to the seers, See not," etc.

I. A CHIEF part of the work of the pulpit is the plain and fervent teaching of daily-life morality. Despite the opinions of those who are ready to say that morality is not the Gospel, I say that there is no Gospel without morality, and that the morality of Christ, that is, a morality whose inspiration is the Spirit of

Christ, is a very large part of the Gospel indeed. What of our Lord's own teachings? Are they chiefly moral teachings or theological? It is needless to answer the question. What do we mean when we talk of being saved from sin? Just what the words say,—that sin shall be taken away; that is, that men shall obey God's law instead of the devil's; that is, that they shall live pure, virtuous, and moral lives.

II. And do not morals occupy a very foremost place in the welfare of mankind? What is it makes the world often so miserable? It is sin, that is immorality; and if we can do away with the sin and immorality, and bring in virtue and morality, then we shall do much to diminish the miseries of our fellow-men. And if it is important that morals should be taught for the welfare and happiness of mankind, who are to teach morals, if not the ministers of religion? If there were other teachers to do the work, we might well stand excused. But if we do not teach morals, they will not be taught at all; there are no authorised teachers except the ministers of religion; and it is for us to educate the public conscience, until men feel each moral distinction as a solemn fact, until the force of public opinion fall heavily upon him who violates the moral law, until a fairer morality takes its place among us.

III. But if this be one part of our work, and a very great part, why have we succeeded so ill? why is the general morality so low? It is because the people have said, "Speak unto us smooth things," and we have yielded to their words. If you tell men the faults which are diseases in their characters, slowly but surely bringing them down to the grave, they cannot bear it, but keep the disease and dismiss the physician. Whether it hurts or not, the truth must be said, if men are to be saved from the error of their ways.

W. PAGE-ROBERTS, *Reasonable Service*, p. 28.

REFERENCES: xxx. 7.—*Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 89. xxx. 11.—*Preacher's Lantern*, vol. ii., p. 229. xxx. 14.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 357.

Chap. xxx., ver. 10.—"Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits."

WHAT was the utility of the Hebrew prophet, and what were the errors to which he was more particularly exposed?

I. It was the duty and the privilege of Israel to keep alive monotheism in the world. It was no less the duty of the

prophetic school to preserve in the chosen nation itself the spirituality of religion. Both agents were in the same relative position—a hopeless minority. And both had but an imperfect success. Yet the nation and the institution served each an important purpose. Monotheism languished, but did not die. And though the prophets were not very successful in imbuing the nation generally with their own spirituality, yet they kept the flame alive. They served to show to the people the true ideal of spiritual, not ritualistic, Judaism, and thus supplied a corrective to priest-taught Judaism.

II. What was the great source of error in the prophet's utterances? What was the great pressure that pushed, or tended to push, him aside from the path of duty? The text has told us: "Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things." The desire of man—king or peasant—to hear from the prophet, or the courtier, or the demagogue, not truth, but flattery,—it was that fatal longing which led them to put a pressure on the prophet which often crushed the truth within him.

III. Prophets exist no longer. But flattery exists still, and the appetite for it can be as strong in a people as ever it was in a king. If nations have not prophets to flatter them, they have those whom they trust as much. Far from attempting to correct their faults, the guides whom they trust are constantly labouring to impress on them that they are the most meritorious and the most ill-used nation in the world. Eyes blinded to present faults; eyes sharpened to past wrongs,—there is no treatment which will more completely and more rapidly demoralise the nation which is subjected to it. There will be no improvement where there is no consciousness of fault; and no forgiveness where the mind is invited, almost compelled, to a constant brooding over wrong. With the growth of such feelings no nation can thrive; and he who encourages them is not the saviour but the destroyer of his country.

J. H. Jellett, *The Elder Son, and Other Sermons*, p. 114.

Chap. xxx., ver. 15 (with Phil. iv. 7).—"In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

The protecting power of peace.

I. "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." Quietness is the opposite of excitement; confidence is the opposite of mistrust. The two pairs of qualities have their place in human things; they have their place also in the

things of God. In both realms the maxim is true, that strength is in the one pair of qualities and weakness is in the other. (1) Quietness is strength. It is the quiet nature that works. It is the quiet spirit that influences. It is the quiet life that impresses and that assimilates excitement, talks and bustles and pushes. But excitement, if it in any sense stirs the world, cannot move and cannot guide it. There is only one kind of excitement which has permanence. Its proper name is not excitement, but enthusiasm; and enthusiasm, being interpreted, is the having God in us; and where God is, there is quietness and there is strength. (2) Confidence is strength. This confidence must be, first, a confidence rightly directed; and, secondly, a confidence stoutly held. The confidence which Isaiah wrote of was, of course, set upon God. And being thus rightly directed, it was a confidence which knew no wavering as to its right to trust, and as to its acceptance with its object.

II. In the New Testament "quietness and confidence" become the peace of God. If you would be happy, if you would be holy, if you would lead a good life, if you would be an influence for good in your generation, you must "seek peace and ensue it." The peace of God Himself must be your prayer, your effort, your ambition. We know where it is to be found—in Jesus Christ, and Him crucified; in Jesus Christ, and Him glorified.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Temple Sermons*, p. 496.

I. THERE are two kinds of character—the fervent and the contemplative; the enthusiastic and the peaceful—and each of them is admirable and each necessary for the progress and well-being of the world. But each of these is liable to a certain degeneracy which is very common; so that instead of fervour we find restlessness; instead of quietude, lethargy.

II. The fussy, flurried, restless character has no perspective about it, no silence, no sobriety, no self-control; it values no blessing which it has, because it is always yearning for some blessing which it has not; it enjoys no source of happiness in the present, because it is always fretting for some source of happiness in the future. It is the restlessness and discontent bred by a soul which has no sweet retirements of its own, and no rest in God, no anchor sure and steadfast on the rushing waves of life.

III. Now to both these common characters this text offers

an antidote: to the self-satisfied, a confidence which is not conceit, a quietude which is that of a glassy sea, not that of a stagnant and corrupting pool; to the restless and anxious, a quietude and confidence which are nothing else than a calm faith and a happy trust in God.

F. W. FARRAR, *In the Days of Thy Youth*, p. 72.

REFERENCES: xxx. 15.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 344. xxx. 18.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 281; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1766; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 341; J. R. Wood, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 145; A. Maclaren, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 126. xxx. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1419; D. Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 113. xxx. 20.—M. Dix, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, p. 245; C. Morris, *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. iii., p. 229. xxx. 21.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 382; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1672; R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i., p. 1; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 376. xxx. 29.—J. R. Macduff, *Communion Memories*, p. 138. xxx. 32.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons on Passages from the Prophets*, vol. i., p. 93. xxxi. 6.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 225.

Chap. xxxii., ver. 13.—"Upon the land of My people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city."

I. THE prophets spoke of things to come, but they spoke of things present also; they held up a light in a dark place, imperfectly understood in their own days, but bright and clear when the full day arose, of which they had obscurely spoken; but they also held up a light, a broad blazing light, to the men of their own times, which would never become clearer than it then was, and would be hardly ever again so clear. That is, they were teachers of righteousness to their own people; the sins which they reproved were the sins which they saw daily committed; the judgments which they threatened were the judgments which these sins would draw down.

II. Our times and our own nation more closely resemble the time of Isaiah's preaching, and the nation of Israel to whom he preached, than any other time or nation that could be named. The worship of God was established by law amongst the Israelites as it is amongst us. Israel, in the days of Isaiah, was full of great riches and great poverty,—great covetousness and luxury on one side, great misery and carelessness of God on the other. Who can look through this land at this moment and not see the same state of things here? Israel, in the days of Isaiah, had too many of those who scorned at God's word

and His promises; and of this, too, they who know what is the present state of England, know that there is too much amongst us. The prophets, then, are in a most remarkable manner the mirror or glass in which we may see our own likeness. To us, God's Christian Israel, a promise is made of a state of overwhelming blessing after a time of fearful judgments—judgments for the punishment of the tares, and for the cleansing and perfecting of the good seed; till at last, when all that do evil or that tempt to evil shall be gathered out of the kingdom of God, the righteous may shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 222.

REFERENCE: xxxii. 15.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 273.

Chap. xxxii.. ver. 17.—"The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."

I. ISAIAH was a true patriot; he was a man of the purest moral character, and of the most absolute faith in God. It broke his heart to see the degradation of his countrymen; he saw that if there was a God in heaven who governed the world on principles of justice, such a social condition of a nation as marked Israel then must draw down what men in his day called judgment. He saw the ruthless Assyrian massing his troops together, and from that quarter the desolation threatened to come; they would be a trouble for many days and many years, till the nation was regenerated by a new and better spirit poured out upon them from on high; till men were estimated at their true value; till the frivolities of fashionable life had given place to earnestness of purpose, and the work of righteousness brought peace, and the effects of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.

II. Every one who has read the utterances of these old Hebrew prophets with any attention can hardly have failed to be struck with what we may call, in the highest sense of the word, their political tone and character. They desired to purify the nation's moral life at its source. They tried to awaken their age from soothing but false dreams, that to-morrow would be as to-day, and much more abundant.

III. There are three things of which when the Spirit came He was to reprove the world—of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. My faith is that national sins bring what the old Hebrew prophets call national judgments, not in the way of miracle, but as a natural and necessary consequence; and, on the other hand, that national righteousness averts them. The deadliest atheism

is that which denies the supremacy of the principle of righteousness in the government of the world.

D. FRASER, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2436.

REFERENCE: xxxii. 17.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 348.

Chap. xxxii., ver. 20.—"Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters."

I. NOTICE, first, the characters here described. They are sowers. Of course a sower implies seed, and it will be well for us to acknowledge at the outset that there is only one granary, so to speak, in which the living seed of the kingdom is treasured, viz., the Bible. (1) The true spiritual sower, having first of all received himself the seed, will manifest a real love for the work. He will go forth willingly, conscientiously, and lovingly to scatter broadcast the precious treasure, not merely on well-cultivated patches of human soil, but "beside all waters," finding very often his chiefest joy in sowing the unlikeliest patches. (2) The true spiritual sower will not only have an ardent love for, but he will also have faith in, his work. This is eminently the case with the earthly husbandman. You see him yonder on the eastern hill-slope with seed-basket in one hand, and the other employed in casting forth the seed. And think you that he would be at all that trouble unless he firmly and in his deepest soul believed, nay, was certain, that the glad harvest-home would crown at length his efforts? If the earthly sower has such faith in the vitality of his seed, how much more should we in that seed of the Word which liveth, abideth for ever. (3) The true spiritual sower will not only have faith in the seed, but also in the soil. The farmer who does not believe the soil capable of producing fruit will certainly not waste time in its cultivation. If we did not to-night believe that between every human heart and the Gospel seed there was such affinity that it could not help taking root therein, we should most certainly give up our toil. (4) The true spiritual sower will often encounter difficulty in his work. (5) The spiritual sower is earth's truest philanthropist.

II. Consider our sphere of operation—"beside all waters." Wherever there is a solitary spot capable of receiving the good and living seed—whether at home or abroad, in dens of squalor or palaces of luxury and ease, in the crowded city or the rural village—we are commanded to go and plant it there.

III. Consider the benediction here pronounced. "Blessed are they that sow beside all waters." (1) The work itself is its own reward. (2) The spiritual sower enjoys the benediction of

others. (3) He has the smile and benediction of Him in whose service he is engaged. J. W. ATKINSON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 940.

REFERENCE: xxxii. 20.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 497.

Chap. xxxiii., ver. 6.—"Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the Lord is his treasure."

I. IT is a pity, and a thing greatly to be regretted, that the tree of which Adam and Eve were ordered not to eat, and did eat, is so often called "the tree of knowledge." It is not its scriptural name. It was not knowledge at all, as we generally use the word "knowledge." It was moral or rather immoral knowledge,—"the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." God would not have made "knowledge" a part of the prophecy of the future good and happiness of Jerusalem, if knowledge were not a great national as well as a great personal blessing.

II. But right knowledge may be put in wrong proportions, or knowledge may be separated from wisdom. If that divorce takes place between two things which God has joined together, no wonder if it brings a curse and not a blessing. Knowledge which has not the fear of the Lord is not knowledge at all. And here lies the error of the day, which says "knowledge," leaving out wisdom. "Knowledge is the stability of the times."

III. But what is wisdom? Either you must take it thus, which is the right application "to use knowledge;" or it is when a sound judgment sits at the helm of the feelings; or, better still, it is a great principle ruling the intellect,—the Eternal in His proper place among the things of time; or, truer still, as we learn from the Proverbs, it is the Lord Jesus Christ, the fountain, the embodiment, the concentration, the essence of wisdom. The degree of a man's union with Christ is the real measure of his wisdom. Wisdom is the preparative; it is a state of mind preceding knowledge; therefore the order, wisdom first, knowledge next;—"wisdom and knowledge."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 10th series, p. 197.

Chap. xxxiii., vers. 14, 15.—"Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly," etc.

1 John iv., ver. 16.—"He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God."

I. THE world's question. I need only remind you how frequently in the Old Testament the emblem of fire is employed

to express the Divine nature. (1) In many places the prominent idea in the emblem is that of the purity of the Divine nature, which flashes and flames as against all that is evil and sinful. (2) The fire, which is the destructive fire of perfect purity, is also the fire that quickens and blesses. "God is love," says John; and love is fire, too. God's wrath is a form of God's love; God hates because He loves. To "dwell with everlasting burnings" means two things. (1) It means to hold a familiar intercourse and communion with God. (2) It means to bear the action of the fire, the judgment of the present and the judgment of the future. The question for each of us is, can we face that judicial and punitive action of that Divine providence which works even here? and how can we face the judicial and punitive action in the future?

II. Look next at the prophet's answer. It is simple. He says that if a man is to hold fellowship with, or to face the judgment of, the pure and righteous God, the plainest dictates of reason and common sense are that he himself must be pure and righteous to match. The details into which his answer to the question runs out are all very homely, prosaic, pedestrian kind of virtues, nothing at all out of the way, nothing that people would call splendid or heroic. Righteous action, righteous speech, inward hatred of possessions gotten at my neighbour's cost, and a vehement resistance to all the seductions of sense,—there is the outline of a homely, every-day sort of morality, which is to mark the man who, as Isaiah says, can "dwell amongst the everlasting fires."

III. Let us take the Apostle's answer. "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." The declaration of the first text lies at the very foundation of the second. What then is the difference between them? (1) Isaiah tells us that we must be righteousness: John tells us how we may be. Love is the productive germ of all righteousness; it is the fulfilling of the law. (2) Isaiah says "Righteousness:" John says "Love," which makes righteousness. And then he tells us how we may get love. We love Him because He first loved us. We can contemplate the cross on which the great Lover of our souls died, and thereby we can come to love Him. The first step of the ladder is faith; the second, love; the third, righteousness.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 2nd series, p. 87.

REFERENCES: xxxiii. 15, 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1764. xxxiii. 16.—*Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 316.

Chap. xxxiii., ver. 17.—"Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off."

THESE words plainly promise to every follower of Christ, if he shall persevere unto the end, that in the resurrection he shall see the Lord Jesus Christ in His beauty, and in the glory of His kingdom. What then is this beauty which shall be revealed to all who attain that world and the resurrection of the holy dead?

I. First, it would seem to be the beauty of His heavenly court. About Him and before Him are the companies of heaven, the hosts and hierarchies of the blessed, the nine orders of seraphic and angelic ministers, and the saintly multitude of God's new creation. Armies of martyrs, companies of prophets, the majesty of patriarchs, the glory of apostles, each one in the full transfigured beauty of his own perfect spirit, and all revealing the warfare of faith, the triumph of the Church, the power of the Cross, the election of God,—these are the degrees and ascents leading upward to the throne of bliss.

II. But if such be the beauty of the King's court, what is the beauty of the King Himself? of His glorious person as very God and very man? We shall not be dangerously out of the way, if we believe that He who is the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His person, did take unto Himself our manhood as His revealed presence for ever, in its most perfect image and likeness; that in Him two natures were united and both were perfect, both were beautiful. Our minds are full of lights and hues, with which we array the objects of our hearts. Let each do as he will. Only let us first love Him, and then weigh these thoughts. Till then, it is all too soon. But be this as it may, there is a beauty we know Him to possess in fulness—the beauty of perfect love. In His face will be revealed all the love of His holy incarnation, of His life of sorrow, of His agony and passion, of His cross and death. The wounds of His hands and feet and of His pierced side are eternal seals and countersigns of the love which has redeemed us for Himself. (1) The King whose beauty is the bliss of heaven is ever drawing and preparing us for His presence by all the mysteries of His Church. (2) By a special and particular discipline, varied and measured for the necessities of every faithful soul, He is making us ready for the vision of His presence.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 431.

THE sensibility of Christ's character. Sensibility includes sensitiveness. Sensitiveness is the power of receiving impressions, whether from nature or man, vividly, intensely, and yet delicately. Sensibility is this passive quality of sensitiveness with activity of soul in addition exercised upon the impressions received. The more perfect the manhood, the more perfect is this sensibility. When we talk of the perfect manhood of Christ, and never consider this side of His nature, we must be making a grave omission—an omission which removes from our view half of the more subtle beauty of His character.

I. It does not seem wrong to say that there was in Him the sensibility to natural beauty. We know that He had watched the tall lilies arrayed more gloriously than Solomon; that He had marked the reed shaken in the wind, and the tender green of the first shoot of the fig-tree. We find His common teaching employed about the vineyard and the wandering sheep, the whitening corn and the living well, the summer rain and the wintry flood and storm. These and many more would not have been so often connected with His action and so ready on His lips had not He loved them well, and received their impressions vividly.

II. But still higher in Him was that intense sensibility to human feeling, which made Him by instinct know, without the necessity of speech, the feelings of those He met. He saw Nathanael in the early days coming to Him from the garden and the fig-tree. He looked upon the simple and earnest face, and recognised the long effort of the man to be true. In a moment He frankly granted the meed of praise: "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." A few words more, in which Christ went home to the secret trials of the man, and Nathaneal was His for ever. Men, women, and children, all who were natural, unconventional, simple in love and powerful in faith, ran to Him as a child to its mother. They felt the beauty of character which was born of sensibility to human feeling and spiritual wants, and they were bound to Him for ever.

S. A. BROOKE, *Christ in Modern Life*, p. 89.

I. CONSIDER how the sensibility of Christ to the beauty of nature became active as sympathy with nature. (1) You remember that passage when, as He walked silently along, He suddenly lifted up His eyes and saw the fields whitening already to harvest. He received the impression in a passive

mood. It changed the whole current of His thoughts, and the whole state of his soul. Immediately thought seized on the change worked within Him by the impression, and expressed it in words. It marks a beautiful character to be so rapidly and delicately impressed; but the beauty of the character becomes vital beauty when the man, through utter sympathy with and love of what he feels, becomes himself creative of new thought. (2) The poet's sensibility to nature becomes active as personal sympathy with the living soul of nature. This also we find in the character of Christ [cf. parable of the sower]. All the impressions were carried into the spiritual mould. They were shaped into a picture of human life, with its temptations and its struggle and its end. (3) The true sensibility, becoming sympathy, sympathises with the distinct nature of each thing it feels, divides each thing from all the rest, gives to each a different praise, feels for each a different feeling, and harmonises itself with the tone of each impression. This is to be found in the character of Christ, and it gives to it a peculiar and delicate beauty. We find it suggested (*a*) in the perfect appositeness of the illustrations He drew from nature to the thoughts He desired to illustrate (*b*) in the choice of certain places for certain moods of the mind.

II. If it be true that sensibility to natural impressions ceases to be a beautiful thing unless it become active through sympathy, it is still more plainly true of sensibility to human feeling. The extraordinary sensibility of Christ to human feeling became operative at once as sympathy, was at once translated into action. His sympathy was given to all the world; but it was not given in a like manner to all, nor at all times. Christ sanctified distinctiveness in friendship and love.

S. A. Brooke, *Christ in Modern Life*, p. 102.

There are human lives which are poems, as there are lives which are prose. They give pleasure as poetry gives it, by the expression of the beautiful. Such a life, at its very highest range, was the life of Christ. We seek its poetry to-day, and we weave our thoughts of it round that profound phrase of Milton's, that poetry must be simple, sensuous, and passionate.

I. That which is simplicity in art is purity in a perfect character. The beauty of Christ's purity was (1) in this, that those who saw it saw in it the glory of moral victory. (2) From this purity, so tried and so victorious, arose two other elements of moral beauty—perfect justice and perfect mercy.

II. The word "sensuousness," in Milton's sense of it, was entirely noble in meaning. Of its representative in a character I have already spoken in speaking of the sensibility of the character of the Saviour to impressions received from nature and from man. But I may add that as the poet produces beautiful work out of the multitudinous world of images and things which he has received, so the exquisiteness of the parables and of the words of Christ, both in form and expression, was the direct result of the knowledge He had gained from this quality of sensibility.

III. The third element of great poetry is passion. We may transfer it directly to a character as an element of beauty. It is best defined as the power of intense feeling capable of perfect expression. It was intense feeling of the weakness and sin of man, and intense joy in His Father's power to redeem, which produced the story of the "Prodigal Son," where every word is on fire with tender passion. See how it comes home, even now, to men; see how its profound humanity has made it universal! "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." How that goes home to the deepest want of the race; how deep the passion which generalised that want into a single sentence; how intense, yet how pathetic, the expression of it; how noble the temperance which stayed at the single sentence and felt that it was enough!

S. A. BROOKE, *Christ in Modern Life*, p. 117.

SHRINKING from Christ's coming.

Before Christ came, the faithful remnant of Israel were consoled with the promise that their eyes should see Him who was to be their salvation. Yet it is observable that the prophecy, though cheering and encouraging, had with it something of an awful character too. "Who may abide the day of His coming, and who shall stand when He appeareth?" We too are looking out for Christ's coming,—we are bid look out, we are bid pray for it; and yet it is to be a time of judgment. If it is to be the deliverance of the saints from sin and sorrow for ever, yet they, every one of them, must undergo an awful trial. How then can any look forward to it with joy, not knowing (for no one knows) the certainty of his own salvation? It is a seeming inconsistency how we can pray for Christ's coming, yet wish then to "work out our own salvation," and "make our calling and election sure." It was a seeming contradiction how good men were to desire His first coming, yet be unable to abide it; how

the Apostles feared, yet rejoiced after His resurrection. Such seeming contradictions arise from the want of depth in our minds to master the whole truth. We have not eyes keen enough to follow out the lines of God's providence and will, which meet at length, though at first sight they seem parallel. Consider how we can pray for the coming of Christ with sincerity.

I. Though we could not at all reconcile our feelings about ourselves with the command given us, still it is our duty to obey the latter on faith. If Abraham could lift up his knife to slay his son, we may well so far subdue our fears as to pray for what nevertheless is terrible.

II. When we pray for the coming of Christ, we do but pray, in the Church's words, that He would "accomplish the number of His elect, and would hasten His kingdom." When then we pray that He would come, we pray also that we may be ready; that all things may converge and meet in Him; that He may draw us while He draws near us, and make us the holier the closer He comes.

III. You dare not pray for Christ's presence now;—would you pray for it had you lived Methuselah's years? I trow not, You will never be good enough to desire it; no one in the whole Church prays for it except on conditions implied. What Christ asks of you is not sinlessness, but diligence.

IV. Consider what you mean by praying, and you will see that at that very time that you are asking for the coming of His kingdom, you are anticipating that coming, and accomplishing the thing you fear. We shall come before Him at last, as now we come to pray—with profound abasement, with awe, with self-renunciation, still as relying upon the spirit He has given us, with our faculties about us, with a collected and determined mind, and with hope. He who cannot pray for Christ's coming, ought not in consistency to pray at all.

V. In that solemn hour we shall have, if we be His, the inward support of His Spirit, carrying us on towards Him, and "witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God."

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. v., p. 46.

UNREAL words.

I. The prophet tells us that, under the Gospel covenant, God's servants will have the privilege of seeing those heavenly sights which were but shadowed out in the law. Before Christ came was the time of shadows; but when He came He brought

truth as well as grace; and as He who is the truth has come to us, so does He in return require that we should be true and sincere in our dealings with Him. To be true and sincere is really to see with our minds those great wonders which He has wrought in order that we might see them. And yet it need scarcely be said nothing is so rare as honesty and singleness of mind; so much so, that a person who is really honest is already perfect. Insincerity was an evil which sprang up within the Church from the first. Ananias and Simon were not open opposers of the Apostles, but false brethren. And as foreseeing what was to be, our Saviour is remarkable in His ministry for nothing more than the earnestness of the dissuasions which He addressed to those who came to Him, against taking up religion lightly, or making promises which they were likely to break.

II. And what is said of discipleship applies undoubtedly in its degree to all profession. To make professions is to play with edged tools, unless we attend to what we are saying. Words have a meaning, whether we mean that meaning or not; and they are imputed to us in their real meaning, when our not meaning it is our own fault. This consideration needs especially to be pressed upon Christians at this day; for this is especially a day of professions. This is a day in which there is (rightly or wrongly) so much of private judgment, so much of separation and difference, so much of preaching and teaching, so much of authorship, that it involves individual profession, responsibility, and recompense in a way peculiarly its own.

III. The mere fact of our saying more than we feel is not necessarily sinful. We ever promise things greater than we master, and we wait on God to enable us to perform them. Our promising involves a prayer for light and strength. Persons are culpably unreal in their way of speaking, not when they say more than they feel, but when they say things different from what they feel. Be in earnest, and you will speak of religion where and when and how you should. Aim at things, and your words will be right without aiming. Aim at looking at this life as God looks at it. Aim at looking at the life to come and the world unseen as God does. Aim at "seeing the King in His beauty." All things that we see are but shadows to us and delusions, unless we mean what we say.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. v., p. 29.

Reverence, a belief in God's presence.

I. It is scarcely too much to say that awe and fear are at the present day all but discarded from religion. There are two classes of men who are deficient in this respect: (1) those who think that they never were greatly under God's displeasure; (2) those who think that, though they were once, they are not at all now, for all sin has been forgiven them;—those, on the one hand, who consider that sin is no great evil in itself; those, on the other, who consider that it is no great evil in them, because their persons are accepted in Christ for their faith's sake. What they agree in is this: in considering God as simply a God of love, not of awe and reverence also—the one meaning by love benevolence, and the other mercy; and in consequence neither the one nor the other regard Almighty God with fear.

II. The signs of want of fear in such are the following: (1) They have no scruple or misgiving in speaking freely of Almighty God. (2) They speak boldly of the Holy Trinity and the mystery of the Divine nature. (3) They speak confidently of their having been converted, pardoned, and sanctified, as if they knew their own state as well as God knows it. (4) Another sign of irreverence is the familiarity with which many persons address our Lord in prayer, applying epithets to Him and adopting a strain of language which does not beseem creatures, not to say sinners.

III. In proportion as we believe that God is present, we shall have feelings of awe and fear; and not to have them is not to realise, not to believe, that He is present. There is a peculiar feeling with which we regard the dead. What does this arise from—that he is absent? No; for we do not feel the same towards one who is merely distant, though he be at the other end of the earth. Surely it is the passing into another state which impresses itself upon us, and makes us speak of him as we do,—I mean, with a sort of awe. We cannot tell what he is now—what his relations to us—what he knows of us. We do not understand him; we do not see him. He is passed into the land that is very far off; but it is not at all certain that he has not some mysterious hold over us. Apply this to the subject before us, and you will perceive that there is a sense, and a true sense, in which the invisible presence of God is more awful and overpowering than if we saw it. The thought of our Saviour, absent yet present, is like that of a friend taken from us, but,

as it were, in dream returned to us, though in this case not in dreams, but in reality and truth. As some precious fruits of the earth are said to taste like all others at once, not as not being really distinct from all others, but as being thus best described, so the state of mind which they are in who believe that the Son of God is here, yet away—is at the right hand of God, yet in His very flesh and blood among us—is one both of joy and praise, or rather one far above either; a feeling of awe, wonder, and praise, which cannot be more suitably expressed than by the Scripture word "fear."

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. v., p. 13.

WORSHIP, a preparation for Christ's coming.

I. What may be the destiny of other orders of being we know not; but this we know to be our own fearful lot—that before us lies a time when we must have the sight of our Lord and Maker face to face. We know not what is reserved for other beings; there may be some which, knowing nothing of their Maker, are never to be brought before Him. For what we can tell, this may be the case with the brute creation. It may be the law of their nature that they should live and die, or live on an indefinite period, upon the very outskirts of His government, sustained by Him, but never permitted to know or approach Him. But this is not our case. We are destined to come before Him; nay, and to come before Him in judgment, and that on our first meeting; and suddenly we have to stand before His righteous presence, and that one by one. At present we are in a world of shadows. What we see is not substantial. Suddenly it will be rent in twain and vanish away, and our Maker will appear. And then that first appearance will be nothing less than a personal intercourse between the Creator and every creature. He will look on us, while we look on Him.

II. Surely it is our plain wisdom, our bounden duty, to prepare for this great change; and if so, are any directions, hints, or rules given us *how* we are to prepare? Scripture tells us that the Gospel covenant is intended, among its other purposes, to prepare us for this future glorious and wonderful destiny—the sight of God; a destiny which, if not most glorious, will be most terrible. And in the worship and service of Almighty God, which Christ and His Apostles have left to us, we are vouchsafed means, both moral and mystical, of approaching God, and gradually learning to bear the sight

of Him. Religious service is "going out to meet the Bridegroom," who, if not "seen in His beauty," will appear in consuming fire.

III. When Moses came down from the mount, and the people were dazzled at his countenance, he put a veil over it. That veil is so far removed in the Gospel, that we are in a state of preparation for its being altogether removed. He who is Judge to us prepares us to be judged,—He who is to glorify us prepares us to be glorified, that He may not take us unawares; but that, when the voice of the archangel sounds, and we are called to meet the Bridegroom, we may be ready.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. v., p. 1.

REFERENCES: xxxiii. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 752; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 323. G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 325.

Chap. xxxiii., vers. 20, 21.—"Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down," etc.

To our Zion, to the Church of Christ, are promised explicitly such gifts as those of the text—unity, truth, success. Of which of them, it may be asked, can we make our boast?

I. The unity of the Church was to be one chief note of its Divine origin. What is our state? Visible unity seems to be no more a mark of the Church of Christ. Of those whose faces are all turned one way, to the place where Jesus the crucified sits on the right hand of God, the east and west have been rent asunder, so that none can re-knit the torn garment of the Lord. And west and east are again divided, each within itself; and we, that are but a section of the Western Church, are torn and torn again. Where is the one fold, whose sheep in one flock follow the leading footsteps of the one Shepherd into green pastures that never fail? God's promise cannot have been in vain. Man must have hindered it; God hath not forgotten it.

II. But if unity has been lost, truth has been preserved to us. And this is our consolation. If the Church be not the great ocean—vast, bright, fresh, a counterpart of the blue heaven above it—still she is like the hundred lakes that nestle among the sheltering hills; they know not each other, but every one of them reflects, and truly, the firmament above. So far as salvation by Christ is brought home to men by the teaching of

the churches, so long there is an underlying bond of agreement which outward misunderstanding cannot cancel.

III. Humiliating to us are those promises of great success which are a part of our charter. The power of the truth we teach, the presence of the Holy Ghost, to turn the outward word into an inward life, seem to assure us of great success in gathering in souls to Christ. If, instead of conquering evil in the heathen nations round us, our missions are almost standing still, and round about our doors at home much heathen ignorance prevails, here is one more disappointment, one more source of perplexity in understanding the ways of God. But God is very good to us. We are broken; our lips stammer over the truth; we labour feebly for the good of souls. Yet God is with us still. If we have refused to be blessed according to His plan, He has blessed us in another. There is much love amongst us, even with our strife; there is a warm and growing zeal in works of good. Without the presence of the Spirit these things could not be.

ARCHBISHOP THOMSON, *Life in the Light of God's Word*, p. 3.

REFERENCES: xxxiii. 20-23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 489. xxxiii. 21.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 329. xxxiii. 22.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 330. xxxiii. 23.—Forsyth and Hamilton, *Pulpit Parables*, p. 217.

Chap. xxxiii., ver. 24.—"And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity."

I. FIRST, let us speak of "those ills that flesh is heir to." Wherever man exists in this world, the cry is heard, "I am sick." It is so because, wherever man exists, there is sin. Disease has been sent to reprove the sins of men, and to correct them with salutary pain. We are not competent of ourselves to decide what specific connection there is between disease and sin in the case of our fellow-men. We may know it in our own case, but we are not to pronounce positively in regard to others. Indeed, the most cursory observation of daily facts may teach us, that while sickness is in the world, because sin is in the world, the measure of sickness which an individual suffers is no index to the measure of sin which he has committed. Endurance of sickness is more often a mark of God's good will than of his severe displeasure. (1) Pain removes us out of the way of temptation, gives us time for reflection, when we were hastily running into danger. (2) How much a formidable sickness has helped a believer in drawing out his thoughts to the heavenly country and the passage into glory!

II. But these considerations, however soothing and comforting they may be, do not remove this original and humbling fact, that sickness is a disorder in God's world, and that it is connected with that moral disorder which we call sin. Consider, secondly, the removal of both these. As sickness and sin entered together, so they shall depart together. When the former things are passed away, then come order, health, perfection, blessedness. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as Saviour of men, coped with both moral and physical evils, and bestowed the double blessing of forgiveness and healing. His skill was never baffled by any form or virulence of disease. He healed all that came unto Him: the blind received their sight, the lame man walked, the deaf heard, and to the poor the Gospel was preached. At the same time, our Lord always dealt with sin as the fundamental disease and disorder of the human race. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." "I am come to call, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

D. FRASER, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 559.

REFERENCE: xxxiii. 24.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1905.

Chap. xxxiv., ver. 5.—"For My sword shall be bathed in heaven."

THE text draws back the curtain which separates the visible world from the invisible. It reveals celestial regions, in which there are also great struggles going on. It lifts up our eyes to the grander movements of the world of spirits; and then it declares that the sword which is to be used in fighting what seems to be the petty wars of the Hebrews and the Edomites, is the same sword which has been used in these celestial conflicts; that the means and instruments of righteousness upon the earth must be the same with the means and instruments of righteousness in the heavens.

I. All good struggle in the world is really God's battle, and ought to recognise itself as such. Every special victory of human progress—the victory over slavery, the victory over superstition, the victory over social wrong, nay even the victory over tough matter, the subduing of the hard stuff of nature to spiritual uses,—each of these is but a step in the great onward march of God taking possession of His own. Fight your battle with the sword bathed in heaven; so you shall make it victorious, and grow strong and great yourself in fighting it.

II. One of the most marvellous things about Jesus is the union of fire and patience. He saw His Father's house turned

into a place of merchandise, and instantly the whip of small cords was in His hands, and He was cleansing the sacred place with His impassioned indignation. And yet He walked day after day through the streets of Jerusalem, and saw the sin, and let the sinners sin on with only the remonstrance of His pure presence and His pitying gaze. Only in God's own time and in God's own way can the battles of the Lord be fought. There is no self-will in Jesus. He is one with His Father, and lives by His Father's will. His sword was always bathed in heaven.

III. The battle which goes on within ourselves is God's battle, and is of supreme importance. If the battle be God's battle, it must be fought only with God's weapons. You want to get rid of your selfishness. You must not kill it with the sword of another selfishness, which thenceforth shall rule in its place. Selfishness can only be cast out by self-forgetfulness and consecration. To count sin God's enemy, and to fight it with all His purity and strength, that is what it means for us that our sword should be bathed in heaven.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Twenty Sermons*, p. 262.

REFERENCES: xxxv. 1, 2.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 275. xxxv. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 243. xxxv. 4.—D. Moore, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3169; W. M. Taylor, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 196. xxxv. 5, 6.—W. Hubbard, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 232; J. Keble, *Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 90.

Chap. xxxv., ver. 8.—"It shall be called The way of holiness."

THE way of holiness is (1) a high way; (2) a strait and narrow way; (3) a plain and obvious way; (4) a safe way.

J. N. NORTON, *Golden Truths*, p. 399.

REFERENCE: xxxv. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1912.

Chap. xxxv., ver. 10.—"Sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

I. "SORROW and sighing shall flee away." (1) The sorrow of bodily disease shall pass away. (2) The sorrow of dying will pass away. (3) The sorrow of bereavement will pass away. (4) The sorrow of poverty will flee away. (5) The sorrows caused by the sins of others will flee away. (6) The sorrows produced by the fear of evil, by dark imaginations, and by blighted hopes, shall flee away. (7) The sorrows of this life's illusions and delusions shall all pass away. (8) The sorrows of sin will pass away. (9) The bitterness of the heart shall flee away.

II. When shall this be? (1) It shall be to the individual saint when his earthly career terminates. (2) To the saints as a body this will be realised at the times of the restitution of all things.

III. By what signs may we be assured that our sorrows will flee away? (1) The first sign is personal faith. (2) A second sign is acknowledged and avowed citizenship in the kingdom of the Saviour. (3) A third sign is the fleeing away of sin—the being cleansed from sin. (4) Another sign is the present good effect of sorrow. (5) A fifth sign is a living hope—hope, born of faith—hope, the child of God's promises—the hope which is the anchor of the soul. When these five signs exist—personal faith in Jesus, avowed citizenship in His kingdom, the fleeing away of sin, the present good effect of sorrow, and a living hope—then we have good reason to expect that our sorrows shall flee away, and that our sighings shall for ever subside.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 2nd series, No. 2.

REFERENCES: xxxvi. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 646; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 283.

Chap. xxxvi., ver. 19.—"Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim?"

I. THESE inquiries may, by a slight accommodation, be used as showing some characteristics of false gods, and showing by implication the glory and worship which are due to the one living Lord. Men have a distinct right to inquire for their gods. Almighty God Himself does not shrink from this test of personality and nearness. He will be inquired of. He has proclaimed Himself accessible.

II. Many a man has felt the most intense pain on observing what he supposed was God's absence from the scene of human affairs. God has been looked for, and looked for apparently in vain. When His voice might have hushed the storm, not a sound was heard. In reply to this difficulty, I suggest three things: (1) As a mere matter of fact, attested by a thousand histories known in our own experience, God has appeared in vindication of His name and honour; (2) God Himself is the only Judge as to the best manner and time of interposition; (3) The very absence of God, being dictated by wisdom, and controlled by love, must be intended to have a happy effect upon human faith. When God is absent, what if His absence be intended to excite inquiry in our hearts? When God is

absent, what if His absence be intended to develop the trust of our nature? It is in having to grope for God we learn lessons of our own blindness and weakness and spiritual incapacity. We know not what God may be working out for us in the very act of withdrawing Himself for a small moment, and for a space immeasurably minute.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 193.

Chap. xxxvii., ver. 10.—"Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee."

I. LET us weigh this piece of satanic advice: "Let not thy God, in whom thou trustest, deceive thee." It is a very dangerous temptation for three reasons. (1) Because it appeals to the natural pride of the heart. There is a universal instinct which makes a man abhor the idea of being deceived. There is something in the very idea which rouses all the pride that lies latent in every heart. To take a man's confidence, to receive all the secret thoughts of his heart, to allow him to confide everything to you, then cold-bloodedly to turn round and leave him in the lurch, having led him on by fair promises, is so cruel an act in its nature, that I marvel not that by a universal instinct every man shudders at the mere supposition of being so treated. (2) There is no disguising the fact that if God did deceive us we are in a hopeless plight, and therefore there is force in the temptation. (3) The methods of God's government being beyond our comprehension, sometimes appear to incline towards the tempter's suggestion,—from appearances one might say, "God is going to leave us in the lurch."

II. Let us turn round and tear the advice up. (1) We may tear it up because it comes too late. If God be a deceiver we are already so thoroughly deceived, and have been so for years, that it is rather late in the day to come and advise us not to be. (2) We may tear it up, because if God deceive us we may be quite certain that there is nobody else that would not. From all we know of our God, His holiness, His righteousness, and His faithfulness, if He can deceive us, then are we quite certain that there are none to be trusted. (3) There is not one atom of evidence to support the libel. Search the world through, and see if you can find a man who will deliberately say, "I have tried God, I have trusted Him, and He has deceived me." (4) There is overwhelming evidence to refute it. Never yet did man trust his God and be put to shame. Heaven and

earth and hell declare that Jehovah never hath deceived and never can deceive.

A. G. Brown, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1131.

References: xxxvii. 22.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 203. xxxvii. 30.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii., Appendix, No. 1

Chap. xxxvii., ver. 31.—"The remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward."

The Christian Church a continuation of the Jewish. Consider one or two difficulties which at first may be felt in receiving this view of God's dealings with His Church, which in itself is most simple and satisfactory.

I. It may be said that the prophecies have not been, and never will be, fulfilled in the letter, because they contain expressions and statements which do not admit, or certainly have not, a literal meaning. This objection is surely not well grounded, for it stands to reason that the use of figures in a composition is not enough to make it figurative as a whole. We constantly use figures of speech whenever we speak; yet who will say on that account that the main course of our conversation is not to be taken literally? Of course there are in the Prophets figurative words, and sentences, too, because they write poetically; but even this does not make the tenour of their language figurative, any more than occasional similes show an heroic poem to be an extended allegory. Why should we find it a difficulty that Israel does not mean simply the Israelites, but the chosen people, wherever they are, in all ages; and that Jerusalem should be used as a name for the body politic, or state or government of the chosen people, in which the power lies, and from which action proceeds?

II. But it may be asked, whether it is possible to consider the Christian Church, which is so different from the Jewish, a continuation of it, or to maintain that what was promised to the Jewish was fulfilled in substance in the Christian? (1) The chosen people had gone through many vicissitudes, many transformations before the resolution which followed on the coming of the promised Saviour, and which was the greatest of all. It is no objection, rather it gives countenance to the notion of the identity of the Jewish Church with the Christian, that it is so different from it, for the Jewish Church was at various eras very different from itself; and worms of the earth at length gain wings, yet are the same; and man dies in corruption and

rises incorrupt, yet without losing his original body. (2) The sacred writers show themselves quite aware of this peculiarity in the mode in which God's purposes are carried on from age to age. They are frequent in speaking of a "remnant" as alone inheriting the promises. The word "remnant," so constantly used in Scripture, is the token of the identity of the Church in the mind of her Divine Creator, before and after the coming of Christ.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day*, p. 180.

REFERENCE: xxxvii.—E. H. Plumptre, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. iv., p. 450.

Chap. xxxviii., ver. 1.—"In those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came unto him, and said unto him, Thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live."

I. MANY have sought to realise the moment after death, and have strained imagination and faith to their utmost in the effort to pierce the veil beyond, and understand how we shall feel. The effort is not altogether in vain; for the attention of the mind will, at all events, give increased reality to the fact of the great change, and of the transit from one world into another, if it do no more. Before the intensity of that gaze one earthly thing after another will disappear, till the fact of the change stands out in all its single solemnity, and we look at it face to face, without a lingering earthly disturbance to cloud its distinctness as earth-born mists cloud the sun, and to clothe the fact with terrors not its own.

II. Why should we shrink from the thought of death, or why should it be painful to us? If there be pain, it is simply and solely because the thought is not habitual. The terror is in us, not in death. Let the thoughts habitually extend over both states, and it will be gone; the strangeness will all disappear. The mind will be in harmony with the facts; and if in some small degree the brightness of life be subdued, it will be only as the slanting shades of summer evening soften the glare, and make the landscape more beautiful than before.

E. GARBETT, *Experiences of the Inner Life*, p. 267.

PERHAPS the most awful moment of our lives is when we first feel in danger of death. All our past life then seems to be a cloud of words and shadows; one less real than another, moving

and floating round about us, altogether external to the realities of the soul. Not only childhood and youth, happiness and sorrow, eager hopes and disturbing fears, but even our communion with God, our faith in things unseen, our self-knowledge, and our repentance, seem alike to be but visions of the memory. All has become stern, hard, and appalling. It is as if it were the beginning of a new existence; as if we had passed under a colder sky, and into a world where every object has a sharpness of outline almost too severe for sight to bear. Let us see what we ought to do when God warns us.

I. First, we must ask ourselves this question, Is there any one sin, great or small, of the flesh or of the spirit, that we willingly and knowingly commit? This is, in fact, the crisis of our whole spiritual life. By consent in one sin, a man is guilty of the whole principle of rebellion, of the whole idea of anarchy in God's kingdom and in His own soul. A holy man is not a man who never sins, but who never sins willingly. A sinner is not a man who never does anything good, but who willingly does what he knows to be evil. The whole difference lies within the sphere and compass of the will.

II. We must next search and see whether there is anything in which our heart in its secret affections is at variance with the mind of God; for if so, then so far our whole being is at variance with His. We may love what God hates, as the pride of life; or hate what God loves, as crosses and humiliations. Surely we ought to fear so long as we are conscious that our will is surrounded by a circle of desires, over which self and the world so cast their shadows as to darken the tracings of God's image upon them.

III. A third test by which to test ourselves is the positive capacity of our spiritual being for the bliss of heaven. When St. Paul bids us to follow after "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," he surely meant something more than a negative quality. Doubtless he meant by "holiness" to express the active aspirations of a spiritual nature, thirsting for the presence of God, desiring "to depart and to be with Christ." We must learn to live here on earth by the measures and qualities of heaven, in fellowship with saints and angels, and with the ever-blessed Trinity, before we can think to find our bliss in the kingdom of God.

IV. There are two short counsels which it may be well to add. (1) The first is, that we strive always to live so as to be akin to the state of just men made perfect. (2) The other is,

that we often rehearse in life the last preparation we should make in death. Joseph made his sepulchre in his garden, in the midst of his most familiar scenes. And he had his reward, for that tomb became a pledge of his election.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 311.

REFERENCES: xxxviii. 1.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 363. xxxviii. 1-5.—E. M. Goulburn, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 403. xxxviii. 9-20.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, 2nd series, p. 59. xxxviii. 12.—R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 95; W. V. Robinson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 29.

Chap. xxxviii., ver. 14.—"O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me."

THESE are some of the words which King Hezekiah wrote when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness. This is surely a good prayer for a sick man, and it is a good prayer for a healthy man too; for if we understand what sickness is, we shall find it is sent that we may learn what is good for us when we are well. A man is broken down then that he may learn his true condition at all times. He feels the burden of death then that he may know he is carrying it about with him continually. The Church to-day * gives us a prayer which is a little longer and fuller than this sentence of Hezekiah's, but which has the same sense in it, and will perhaps help you to see more clearly what it means. The prayer is: "Almighty God, who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves; Keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls; that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord."

I. The thought concerning God which is set before us in this collect is contained in the words, "Almighty God, who seest." The recollection that God knoweth the very want which we are going to tell Him of is at the bottom of all prayer. It is in God's light that we see light. It is when we believe He is looking into our hearts that we begin to know something of what is passing there. We begin to know ourselves because God knows us; and then this feeling, that He knew us before we knew ourselves, and that our knowledge comes from His knowledge, helps us to pray.

Second Sunday in Lent.

II. The collect supposes a man who has suffered trials without and temptations within, who has found that he has a poor suffering body of death with him continually; and what is worse than a body of death—a weak heart, an inconstant will, unequal to all the ten thousand dark and evil thoughts which are assailing it. It supposes him, after long striving with himself, to know how he may overcome this evil and weakness, suddenly struck with the thought, "But God knows that I have no power of myself to help myself." He does not intend us to help ourselves; He did not send us into the world that we might learn to help ourselves, but to depend on Him. Is not this experience of our weakness and evil mercifully given us that we may throw away the vain confidence which has caused it, that we may see our own weakness even as God sees it, and that we may learn wholly to give up the keeping of ourselves to Him?

III. Our wants are (1) to be kept outwardly in our bodies; (2) to be kept inwardly in our souls. The life of the body perishes unless God preserves it; but the life of the soul perishes unless it is trusting Him to preserve it, unless it is understanding His care and love and resting in Him.

F. D. MAURICE, *Christmas Day and Other Sermons*, p. 114.

THERE is such a vast disproportion between a man and some of his own feelings—between the inner and the outer life of a man—that the wonder is, not that we should sometimes feel the burden of existence, but that there should be any man who should not be always saying, "I am oppressed."

I. There are few minds who do not look out for sympathy. It is an instinct of our nature, that we must lean somewhere. Almost all error, all superstition, all worldliness, resolves at last into the feeling that a man must lean; but he is leaning on a wrong base. It is upon this great principle in the man's breast that the Gospel lays hold and points it to Christ. It sets Him forth as the one great Undertaker for all His people's wants; it bids all of us come to Him with the feeling, "Undertake for me, Lord."

II. What are Christ's undertakings for us? (1) He has undertaken to pay all our debts: they are very great. (2) He has undertaken that we shall never be alone: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." (3) He has undertaken that you shall never be really overcome: "My strength is made perfect in weakness." (4) He has undertaken to place you on the sunny

side of everything all life through: for "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (5) He has undertaken that you shall always have a place of refuge: "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." (6) He has undertaken that death shall be to you only a name, not a reality: "He that believeth on Me shall never die."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 4th series, p. 274.

REFERENCES: xxxviii. 14.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 346; A. Watson, *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 125.

Chap. xxxviii., ver. 15.—"I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul."

THE restoration of belief.

In the especial case of Hezekiah, belief was restored by a great shock, which brought him into contact with reality. God appeared to him—not as to Adam, in the cool of the day, but as He came to Job, in the whirlwind and the eclipse—and Hezekiah knew that he had been living in a vain show. The answer of his soul was quick and sad: "By these things men live, O Lord." These are the blows which teach men what life really is.

I. The blow which sobered Hezekiah was a common one. It did nothing more than bring him face to face with death. The process whereby his dependence on God was restored was uncomplicated. But there are far worse shocks than this, and recovery from them into a godlike life is long and dreadful. There are things which at first seem to annihilate belief, and change an indifferent or a happy nature into earnest, even savage, bitterness. One of these is the advent of irrecoverable disease, protracted weakness, or protracted pain. God forgives our human anger then, but we speak roughly to Him at first. It is a dark anger, and may grow in intensity till faith and love are lost for this life; but it will not reach that point if we have some greatness of soul, if we are open to the touch of human love. One day the Gospel story in all its sweet simplicity attracts and softens the sufferer's heart. He reads that Christ's suffering in self-sacrifice brought redemption unto man. Surely, he seems to dream, this is no isolated fact. I too, in my apparent uselessness, am at one with the Great Labourer: I bear with Christ my cross for men. This is not only the restoration of belief, it is the victory of life.

II. But there are more dreadful things than long disease.

There is that shipwreck which comes of dishonoured love. Many things are terrible, but none is worse than this. In some there is no remedy but death, and far beyond, the immanent tenderness of God. But there are many who recover, whom God leads out of the desert into the still garden of an evening life of peace and usefulness and even joy. Lapse of time does part of the work. In the quietude of middle life we look back upon our early misery, and only remember the love we felt. Faith is restored, hope is renewed, when like Christ you can turn and say, Father, forgive him, forgive her, for they knew not what they did.

III. There have been and are many of us who are conscious that, as we have passed into the later period of life and mingled with the world, our early faith has also passed away. We have lost belief because our past religion was borrowed too much from others. If we wish for perfection, and are not content to die and love no more, the restoration of belief may be attained by the personal labour of the soul. It is worth trying what one personal effort to bring ourselves into the relation of a child to a Father, in all the naturalness and simplicity of that relation, will do towards restoring faith and renewing life with tenderness.

S. A. Brooke, *Christ in Modern Life*, p. 380.

Chap. xxxviii., ver. 16.—"O Lord, by these things men live."

Affliction as related to life.

I. Take first the conception of life as a whole, and see how that is modified or altered by experiences like those through which Hezekiah passed. They who have had no such critical experiences in any form have never fully awakened to the difference which there is between mere existence and life. In how many instances has a serious illness, or a terrible business humiliation, or a trying domestic bereavement when the world seemed going from beneath him, and he was left alone, in the blank and solitude of things, to face eternity and God, brought a man to revise his theory of life! He has rectified the perspective of his existence, and has been led to value the now for its bearing on the hereafter; the present for its motherhood of the future.

II. But passing now to the quality of the life, we may see how that also is affected by such experiences of affliction. Such experiences develop (1) the element of strength, whether in its passive exercise as patient endurance, or in its active manifestation as persevering energy. Afflictions are to the soul what

the tempering is to the iron, giving it the toughness of steel, and the endurance too, and if that be so we may surely say regarding them, "By these things men live." (2) Unselfishness. When a man has been in the very grip of the last enemy, and has recovered, or has been within a little of losing all he had, and has escaped, you can understand how such an experience sends him out of himself. It intensifies for him the idea of life as a stewardship for God, and he sees the folly of making all the streams of his effort run into himself. Affliction of some sort seems to be requisite for the production in us of thoughtfulness for others. (3) Sympathy is born out of such experiences as those of Hezekiah. He who has passed through trial can feel most tenderly for those who are similarly afflicted. (4) Experiences like Hezekiah's have much to do with the usefulness of a man's life. Usefulness is not a thing which one can command at will. It is, in most cases, the result of a discipline, and is possessed by those who in a large degree are unconscious that they are exercising it. It depends fully more on what a man is than on what he does; or if it is due to what he does or says, that again is owing very much to what he is; and what he is now has been determined by the history through which he has been brought.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Contrary Winds*, p. 136.

REFERENCES: xxxviii. 17.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 231; *Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 316, vol. xix., No. 1110, vol. xxiii., No. 1337.

Chap. xxxviii., vers. 18, 19.—"**For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day,**" etc.

HEZEKIAH presents to us here, in the strongest contrast, the two states of life and death.

I. Death was to him—for he lived before the day of Christ—a far darker, far drearier state than it is to us. If he had any hope of a life beyond the grave, it does not appear in his words. He probably looked upon death as the close of all,—the gate, not to an immortal life, but the entrance into a land dark and silent, where all things are forgotten. But it is this very view of death, this looking at it as the end-all of man's short existence, which enhances to Hezekiah the value of life. Because life afforded his single field for serving God, he grudged to have it shortened. Every hour saved from that dark silence was precious to him.

II. Even in this darker view there is a lesson for our learning. Though death be not now the end of all life, it is the end of this life—the end of our day of grace—the end of that period which God gives us to see if we will serve Him or no.

III. Every life is wasted and misspent which is not led to the glory and praise of God. To lead such a life we must begin early. None are too young to work in God's vineyard. God will not be put off with the leavings of our days. We owe Him, and He expects of us, the best that we can offer—the prime of our years, the vigour of our faculties, our life whilst it is fresh and young. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, in which thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Sermons for the Christian Year*, p. 38.

Hezekiah was, in the full sense of the word, a good king. His piety is shown (1) in his conduct with reference to idolatry; (2) in his conduct in the matter of the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib. But there are two passages in his life which show the weak side of his character. One is his parading his treasures before the ambassadors of the king of Babylon; the other is his conduct in the matter of his severe illness, which is recorded in the chapter from which the text is taken.

I. The essence of the history is this, that in the prospect of death Hezekiah's strength of mind quite broke down. He looks upon death as a thing to be dreaded and shunned; he speaks of it in a way in which no Christian who has learned the Lord's prayer could ever venture or even wish to speak of it. Hezekiah looked to his grave with such melancholy feelings, because he could not clearly see a life beyond it. He knew that he must serve God while life lasted; he had manifestly no express revelation beyond, and therefore he looked upon the grave with dismay.

II. If it were not for the light which Christ our Lord has thrown into the grave, we should mourn like Hezekiah, and our eyes would fail as did his. We have greater spiritual help than Hezekiah, and brighter light, and clearer grounds of hope, and it is incumbent on us to act, not like those who groped their way in the twilight of the old dispensation, but like those upon whom the brightness of the knowledge of the glory of God has shined in the face of Jesus Christ.

Bishop Harvey Goodwin, *Parish Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 78.

References: xxxviii. 19.—J. N. Norton, *Golden Truths*, p. 98. xxxviii. 20.—R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 104.

Chap. xl., ver. 1.—"Comfort ye, comfort ye My people."

I. In our text there is a specification of one large class of medicine for spiritual disease; and therefore, by inference, one large class of sickness. "Comfort" is the staple of the prescription, and what was the condition of the patients? "Cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord's hands double for all her sins." Here evidently the condition of Jerusalem is one of distress, anxiety, and distraction, and this accords most exactly with a passage of the Psalms: "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, Thy comforts delight my soul." We conclude that the case of sickness so emphatically prescribed for in our text is that under which the righteous may be labouring from the difficulties which may encompass him. Our text contains a prescription, but not a prescription which will serve in all cases wherever there is a throng of anxious thoughts, but only in cases in which the party strives to walk according to the precepts of religion, and may therefore be classed among the people of God.

II. Consider the faithfulness and efficacy of the medicine prescribed. The case is that of a righteous man, on whom cares and sorrows press with great weight, and whose mind is torn with anxieties, and thronged by a crowd of restless intruders, distracting him even in his communings with God. Now the very disease under which this man labours incapacitates him in a great measure for any process of argument. The comforts of God are the rich assurances of His forgiving and accepting love; the gracious declarations of His everlasting purpose of preserving to the end those whom He has chosen in Christ; the multiplied promises of spiritual guidance, protection, and victory, which make to the eye of faith the page of Scripture one sheet of burning brightness, always presenting most radiantly what is most suited to the necessity. There are the foretastes of immortality, the glimpses of things within the veil, the communications of the Spirit, the anticipations of glory, which if the cold and the worldly resolve into a dream of enthusiasm, the faithful know by experience belong to the realities of their portion. Here then are comforts, and it is the part of the righteous man in his season of anxiety and distraction to confine himself to these comforts, regarding them as a sick man the cordials which are specially adapted to his state.

III. We make no far-fetched application of the text, if we affirm it as specially appropriate on the approach of the last

enemy, death. What has the believer to do when conscious that the time of his departure is at hand, but seize the consolations of Christianity, and give himself meekly over into the Good Shepherd's hands? Let him not argue; let him not debate; let him not sit in judgment,—let him simply have recourse to the comforts of God.

H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1712.

I. With these words Isaiah opens his gospel; God's good word to man. The earlier chapters are burdens; in view of the sins and wrongs around him, he lifts up his voice and denounces doom. But mercy rejoices against judgment, so he breaks forth before the burden is ended into the most sublime strains of consolation and hope which God's prophets have ever been commissioned to utter to the world. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but I am thy Saviour," is the real text of his prophecy. It is the theme of his poem wrought out with consummate art through a hundred suggestive variations. A people self-destroyed, God-redeemed, is the thought which meets us everywhere; and it is this which makes these closing chapters the great evangelic poems, not of Israel only, but of the world.

II. The words of this passage (1-11) look on to the captivity. The people, afflicted, chastened, broken in spirit, are called upon to listen to the strains of consolation which God has breathed for them in His Word. These words look on through all the ages of human history. It is comfort throughout and comfort to the end. The mercy of judgment is a subject which we too little study. Yet mercy is the deepest element in every judgment with which God afflicts mankind. Great epidemics are healing ordinances. They purify the vital springs. They leave a purer, stronger health when their dread shadow has passed by. Catastrophes in history are like thunder-storms; they leave a fresher, brighter atmosphere. Reigns of terror are the gates through which man passes out into a wider world.

III. Isaiah had the profoundest right to speak of comfort, because he could speak of the advent of the Redeemer to the world. He not only preaches comfort, but discloses the source from which it springs.

J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 1.

I. In the first place, let us identify the people spoken of. "Comfort ye, comfort ye *My* people." There was a first reference to the people of the Jews, who we know all through

were a people that shadowed forth other people. The people spoken of in these words who are to be comforted are pre-eminently the people of God. They are those who have Christ for their righteousness, and the Spirit for their strength, grace for their life, God for their Father, heaven for their home.

II. Notice next those messengers through whom this comfort is to be given. There seems to have been no plurality at first, for this is the writing of the prophet Isaiah; but as it was written it was not done with, and as the secretary of the Holy Spirit entered the minute in this book the All-wise Spirit said, "I shall want it for the future; for Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter, and Paul,—for all My servants through all ages. I shall be saying through all time through them, 'Comfort *ye*, comfort *ye* My people."

III. Consider the comfort we are to convey. "Comfort ye My people." (1) By reminding them that I am their God. All this chapter is a remembrance that God is the Father of His people. (2) By reminding them that their captivity in this world is nearly over, and that they will soon be home. There is a glorious world beyond this. We know that there is such a world. Let us cherish the thought, and push through the difficulties of this world. We shall not see it until we reach the throne of glory, and see God as He is. (3) The Saviour is coming to this world, and is on His way to show His glory here. Comfort the people who feel amazed and disquieted by the sight of the strong things that are arrayed against Christ. Tell them that Christ will overcome these things. He will come and fill the world with His victories.

C. STANFORD, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 9.

REFERENCES: xl. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 221; *Ibid.*, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 197; C. J. Vaughan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 168. xl. 1, 2.—H. Christopherson, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 440; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 110; S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 117. xl. 3.—J. Service, *Sermons*, p. 1; A. Watson, *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 380; J. Baldwin Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 40. xl. 3, 4.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 129.

Chap. xl., vers. 3-5.—"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God," etc.

I. THE text teaches us that there are certain things which hinder the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom, spoken of here as

valleys, hills, mountains, rough places, and crooked ways. The obstacles to the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom are so numerous, that I must not even attempt to name them, but refer, as an illustration, to heathenism and idolatry abroad, and to ignorance and vice at home. The heathenism we are trying to remove; and that yawning valley of ignorance we are, by God's grace, as a nation, trying to fill up; but our national vices, which are like mountains, we are also commanded by God to level and to remove. Take the vice of intemperance. (1) Intemperance hinders the progress of God's kingdom at home. (2) It is also a hindrance to the spread of the Gospel abroad. How is it that though eighteen hundred years have passed since the Redeemer made His great provision, and gave us the command to carry the glad tidings to all, midnight darkness rests upon most of the human family? (*a*) There is a want of means. (*b*) There is a want of men. (*c*) There is a want of success on the part of those who are already in the field. With all those reasons strong drink has something to do.

II. It is the duty of the Christian Church to sweep this mountain away. (1) The Church *must*, if she would hold her own. There is no neutrality in this war. (2) The Church must, if she would please her Master.

III. The text puts before us the glorious result. "Thy kingdom come" is our cry. Here is God's answer: "Set to work; lift up the valley, bring down the mountain, make the rough places plain and the crooked places straight, and then I will come." God waits for man. As soon as the Church is prepared to do the Lord's bidding, the world shall be filled with His glory.

C. GARRETT, *Loving Counsels*, p. 142.

THE imagery of the text appears to be drawn from the journeyings of Israel to Canaan. That great event in their national history was constantly before the mind of Isaiah, and is presented in his writings with ever-varying illustration. Let us

I. Compare this prophecy with the history of the Exodus. The prophecies of God's Word shine both before and behind. They not only illumine the darkness of futurity, but they reflect a radiance back on the page of history. So here. In the desert the Gospel was preached to Israel (as St. Paul says) in types and ordinances, and especially by that great act of their redemption out of Egypt. In this was a perpetual type of the Redeemer's work of salvation, a foreshadowing of the inspired song, "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God." In

the ordinances given by the dispensation of angels might be heard "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way for our God."

II. Isaiah used the message as an illustration of his own ministry. He too, living now probably in the idolatrous reign of Manasseh, felt himself in a spiritual desert. Led by faith he sees afar off, and the seer is himself transported into that bright future. Just as heralds announced the coming of an Oriental king, and pioneers prepared his march across hill and vale and desert plains, so would Divine Providence lead His exiles home, removing all obstacles from their path, and overruling the designs of their enemies.

III. The words of Isaiah certainly point on to Gospel times; for John the Baptist distinctly announced himself as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." This preparation, in a spiritual sense, he accomplished by his personal ministry.

IV. But even in John's day the words had a wider signification. Not only the land of Israel, but the Gentile world, even all flesh, was then being prepared to see the salvation of God. Providential agencies were even then at work preparing Christ's way among the Gentiles, as it were constructing a road for the march of Christianity through the desolate regions of heathendom. The two most powerful agencies were Greek literature and Roman dominion.

V. The prophecy sheds a lustre on the world's future. The Christ has indeed come to earth, but it was to suffer and to die. Once more in this wide desert the "glory of the Lord shall be revealed," and not one but "all lands shall see it together."

S. P. Jose, *Oxford and Cambridge Undergraduates' Journal*, May 13th, 1880.

References: xl. 3-5.—A. Rowland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 323; H. P. Liddon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 200.

Chap. xl., ver. 4.—"Rough places plain."

I. Rough places. (1) In general human history. (2) In individual human life.

II. Rough places made plain. (1) The supreme power of Jesus Christ. (2) The supreme power of Jesus Christ used for the advantage of mankind. (3) The advantage of mankind identified with the coming kingdom of Jesus Christ.

III. The tranquil and blessed future of the world. Christianity is good news. Inequalities are to be rectified. Relations are to be adjusted. Parker, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 59.

Chap. xl., ver. 5.—"And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Has this revelation of God's glory respect only to the past and to the present? Has it nothing to do with the future? We believe that Jesus Christ was that image of God whom prophets had been desiring to behold. He took flesh, and through His flesh showed forth the fulness of that glory which the previous ages had only seen in scattered glimpses. Is that enough for us? If not, what is it we wish for? Is it something else than the manifestation of Christ? Is Jesus the One that shall come, or do we look for another?

I. If you read the Old Testament, you will perceive that there is a striking uniformity amidst the variety of its records. The misery of the Jewish people in the different ages of their commonwealth is produced by the most different instruments, but the cause of it is always the same. *Tyranny* is the cause of their groaning. And as the disease is the same, the remedy is the same. A deliverer is their one infinite necessity. Men appear as their deliverers, but they appear in the name of the Lord. He is the enemy of tyrants. He is the Deliverer.

II. Isaiah saw more clearly than any one that only One who perfectly revealed God—who perfectly revealed Him as a Deliverer—could be the Person whom Israelites and all nations desired, whom He Himself was teaching them to desire. He saw, indeed, in every event which took place in his own day a partial epiphany—a manifestation of God the righteous Judge, of God the Deliverer. But the more he recognised these revelations of the glory of God, the more he craved for One that should be perfect, that should be in the strictest and fullest sense for *all flesh*. Less than that it was treason against God to expect.

III. Let us have no doubt that, however we may classify men's oppressions as individual or as social, as political or intellectual, as animal or spiritual, God Himself has awakened the cry for freedom. Let us have no doubt that that cry is, when truly understood and interpreted, a cry that God will appear as the Deliverer, that His glory may be revealed. We ought to stir up hope in every human being,—hope for present help from God to overcome the sin that most easily besets him; hope that he shall be able to say to the mountains which now stand in his way, "Remove, and be cast into the sea;" hope for the future, that the glory of God the Deliverer shall be fully revealed; and that we, being included in the "all flesh" of which the prophet

writes, bearing that nature in and for which Christ died, shall be able to see it and rejoice in it.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 175.

REFERENCES: xl. 5.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 327; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 361.

Chap. xl., ver. 6.—"The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field."

I. THE text is an assertion of the shortness and uncertainty of life. And we may naturally be surprised that there should be so sublime and startling a machinery for the delivery to us of so commonplace a truth. Here is a voice from the firmament. An invisible agency is brought to bear, as though for the announcement of something altogether startling and unexpected. The amazed prophet asks what the message can be for the delivery of which he is summoned by so awful a call. And then he is merely called to publish what every one knew before: "All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field." Truths, which we never think of disputing, may be practically those which we are most in the habit of forgetting. It is of well-known truths that a voice from heaven must speak to us, if it would speak of what it is important that we know.

II. It is but needful that the shortness and uncertainty of life should be actually felt, and there must pass a great moral revolution over the world; and numbers who persist in sinning because they believe themselves sure of an opportunity for repentance would be almost driven to an immediate attention to religion, feeling that if not an immediate there would probably be none. And the effect wrought on the unconverted, if we could penetrate them with a consciousness of the uncertainty of life, would not be without its parallel in the righteous on whom we cannot charge the habitual disregard of the dread things of the future. The same feeling is at work, if not in the same measure, in the righteous and the unrighteous—the feeling that the day of death is not near. It could not be that men professing religion would so entangle themselves with the affairs of earth, be so loth to make sacrifices in the cause of God, and apply themselves with so little earnestness and self-denial to the discipline of the heart, were they fraught with the persuasion that "the Judge standeth at the door."

III. If the exhibitions of human frailty may not teach men

how frail they are, it may be that these exhibitions will dispose men to prayer. They cannot produce the consciousness, that "in the midst of life we are in death;" but they may excite the feeling, that there ought to be this consciousness, and this feeling may issue in an earnest cry that God would implant it.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1827.

REFERENCES: xl. 6-8.—A. Boyd, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 498; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 999; J. G. Wood, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 114.

Chap. xl., ver. 8.—"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

THE immediate, the historical purpose of these words is undoubtedly to reassure the Jews of the captivity. It was to men whose eyes were resting on the magnificence and power of Bablyon that Isaiah spoke, but of another land and out of an earlier age, the solemn words: "All flesh is grass, and all the beauty thereof is as the flower of the field." In contrast with the perishing life of the great empire city and its vast populations, Isaiah points to the "word of our God." That word, he says, "will stand for ever."

I. By the word of our God—of Jehovah, the God of His people—Isaiah means, beyond doubt, in the first instance, the word of promise uttered in the desert by the inspired voice. The promise of the return from Babylon, the promise of the after-presence of Israel's great Redeemer, would be verified. St. Peter detaches this text for us Christians from its immediate historical setting. He widens it; he gives it a strictly universal application.

II. Isaiah refers to the grass as an emblem of the perishable and the perishing. In looking at it, we look at that which is at best a vanishing form, ready almost ere it is matured to be resolved into its elements, to sink back into the earth from which it sprang. As soon as we are born, says the wise man, we begin to draw to our end. That is true of the highest and of the lowest forms of natural life. Whatever else human life is, whatever else it may imply, it is soon over. It fades away suddenly like the grass. The frontiers of life do not change with the generations of men, as do its attendant circumstances.

III. The word of the Lord endureth for ever. How do we know that? Certainly not in the same way as we know and are sure of the universality of death. We know it to be true if we believe two things: first, that God the perfect moral being

exists; secondly, that He has spoken to man. If He is eternal then that which He proclaims as His truth and will, will bear on it the mark of His eternity. The word of God, speaking in conscience, speaking in revelation, is like God Himself above the waterfloods of change; it lasts. While men differ from each other about His word, it remains what it was, hidden, it may be, like our December sun,—hidden behind the clouds of speculation, or behind the clouds of controversy, but in itself unchanged, unchangeable. "Thy word, O Lord, endureth for ever in heaven."

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 706.

"HAST thou not known?" This is not a new revelation. It is an appeal to memory, and that is a strong point in all the Divine pleading. Our memory is to be as the prophet of the Lord in our life. Recollection is to be inspiration; the forty years gone are a pledge of the forty years to come. Let a man be faithful to his own recollections, and it is impossible he can long be despondent, weary and slow of heart, to lay hold of the great work and discipline of life.

I. Is God almighty? (1) Then do not fear for the stability of His works. (2) Have no fear about the realisation of His promises. (3) Do not imagine you can escape His judgments. (4) Be assured that the throne of right shall stand upon the ruins of all wrong.

II. God is not only powerful, but *all wise*. There is no searching of His understanding. Infinite strength would terrify us, but infinite strength under the dominion of infinite mind recovers us from the tremendous shock which comes of abstract, immeasurable, unwasting strength. Is God all-wise? (1) Then the darkest providences have meaning. (2) His plan of salvation is complete and final, and we shall waste our strength and show how great is our folly by all attempts to improve the method of redemption and recovery of the world. (3) Our individual life is all understood by Him. That life is but dimly known to ourselves. We catch glimpses of it here and there, but its scope and meaning are still unrevealed to us. It is enough that God knows our life, and that His wisdom is pledged as our defence. (4) We have a guarantee of endless variety in our future studies and services. God is ever extending our knowledge of His works, in reward of the endeavours we are making to acquaint ourselves with the wonders by which we are enclosed.

III. The subject forces upon us the solemn enquiry: What

is our relation to this dread Being, whose power is infinite, and whose wisdom is past finding out? We must sustain some relation to Him. We are the loyal subjects of His crown, or rebels in His empire. Pause and determine the answer. Everything depends upon our relation to the cross of Jesus Christ.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1870, p. 349.

REFERENCES: **xl. 8.**—G. G. Bradley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 17; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 73. xl. 9.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 275; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 362; J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 101; W. Young, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 330; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 330. xl. 11.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 652, vol. xiv., No. 794, vol. ix., No. 540, vol. xxiii., No. 1381; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 177; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 3rd series, p. 44; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, pp. 135, 293. **xl. 20.**—*Clergyman's Magazine*, **vol. ii., p. 244.**

Chap. xl., ver. 27.—**"Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God?"**

I. ISAIAH here reaches and rests upon the very foundations of the faith, trust, and hope of mankind—the living God. Creation rests on His hand; man, the child of the higher creation, rests on His heart. What His power is to the material universe His moral nature and character are to the spiritual universe. This is the one ultimate answer of the Bible to all the questions which perplex and bewilder the intellect of man, the one solution of the mysteries which baffle his heart. "Have faith in God." Creation lives by faith unconsciously, and all her voices to our intelligent ear iterate and reiterate, "*Have faith in God.*"

II. Have faith in God. What do we know of God that we should trust Him? what aspects does He present to us? We have two sources of knowledge—what He has said to, and what He has done for, man. (1) There is something unspeakably sublime in the appeal in Isa. xl. 26. It is heaven's protest against man's despair. Nor is Isaiah the only sacred writer who utters it. There is something very strikingly parallel in Job. And in both cases God's appeal is to the grand and steadfast order of the vast universe, which He sustains and assures (read Job xxxviii.). God tells us, if words can tell, that all the hosts of heaven are attendant on the fortunes of mankind. They all live that God's deep purpose concerning

man may be accomplished. (2) God declares here that we are not only involved inextricably in the fulfilment of His deepest and most cherished counsels, but that we are needed to satisfy the yearnings of His Father's heart.

III. We may apply these principles to the seasons of our experience when faith in the living God is the one thing which stands between us and the most blank despair. (1) The deep waters of personal affliction. (2) The weary search of the intellect for truth, the struggle to comprehend the incomprehensible, to know the inscrutable, to see the invisible, which is part, and not the least heavy part, of the discipline of a man and of mankind. (3) Dark crises of human history, when truth, virtue, and manhood seem perishing from the world.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *Aids to the Development of the Divine Life*, No. 9.

REFERENCES: xl. 27-29.—E. L. Hull, *Sermons*, 1st series, p. 81. xl. 27-31.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 136. xl. 28.—Parker, *Cavendish Pulpit*, p. 269.

Chap. xl., vers. 27-29.

NOTICE: I. Isaiah's despondency. It arose from a twofold source. (1) The sense of a Divine desertion: "My way is hid from the Lord." (2) The absence of Divine recompense: "My judgment is passed over from my God."

II. The truth that removed Isaiah's despondency. (1) The greatness of God in nature. (2) The tenderness of the revealed will.

III. The results of its removal. (1) Strength in weakness. (2) Immortal youth.

E. L. HULL, *Sermons*, 1st series, p. 94.

Chap. xl., vers. 28-31.—"The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary . . . He giveth power to the faint . . . even the youths shall faint and be weary . . . but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

I. WE have, first, the prophet's appeal to the familiar thought of an unchangeable God as the antidote to all despondency and the foundation of all hope. The life of men and of creatures is like a river, with its source and its course and its end. The life of God is like the ocean, with joyous movement of tides and currents of life and energy and purpose, but ever the same and ever returning upon itself. Jehovah, the unchanged, unchangeable, inexhaustible Being, spends and is unspent; gives and is none the poorer; works and is never wearied; lives and with

no tendency to death in His life; flames—with no tendency to extinction in the blaze.

II. Notice, next, the unwearied God giving strength to wearied men. The more sad and pathetic the condition of feeble humanity by contrast with the strength, the immortal strength, of God, the more wondrous is that grace and power of His which are not contented with hanging there in the heavens above us, but bend right down to bless us and to turn us into their own likeness. It is much to preserve the stars from wrong; it is more to restore and to bring power to feeble men. It is much to uphold all those that are falling so that they may not fall; but it is more to raise up all those that have fallen and are bowed down.

III. The last thing in these words is, the wearied man lifted to the level of the unwearied God and to His likeness. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." That phrase means, of course, the continuous bestowment in unintermitting sequence of fresh gifts of power; as each former gift is exhausted, more is required. Grace abhors a vacuum, as nature does; and just as the endless procession of the waves rises on the beach, or as the restless network of the moonlight irradiation of the billows stretches all across the darkness of the sea, so that unbroken continuity of strength after strength gives grace for grace according to our need, and as each former supply is expended and used up God pours Himself into our hearts anew. That continuous communication leads to the perpetual youth of the Christian soul.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 2nd series, p. 293.

REFERENCES: xl. 28-31.—H. F. Burder, *Sermons*, p. 263. xl. 29.—*Preacher's Lantern*, vol. i., p. 444. xl. 30, 31.—J. B. Heard, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 308.

Chap. xl., ver. 31.—"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

I. CONSIDER, first, what it is to wait upon the Lord. Three things make it: service, expectation, patience. "Wait on the Lord." We must be as those Eastern maidens who, as they ply their needle or their distaff, look to the eye and wait upon the hand of their mistress, as their guide which is to teach them, or their model which they are to copy. Our best lessons are always found in a Father's eye. Therefore, if you would "wait upon the Lord," you must be always looking out for voices—

those still small voices of the soul,—and you must expect them, and you must command them. But service, however devoted, or expectation, however intense, will not be waiting without patience. Here is where so many fail. The waiting times are so long: the interval between the prayer and the answer, between the repentance and the peace, between the work and the result, between sowing-time and reaping-time, and we are such impatient, impetuous creatures. We could not "tarry the Lord's leisure."

II. Consider, next, the action: elevation, rapid progress, a steady course—soar, run, walk. Is it not just what we want—to get higher, to go faster, and to be more calmly consistent? (1) Elevation. What are the wings? Beyond a doubt, faith, prayer; or, if you will, humility and confidence in a beautiful equipoise, balancing one another on either side, so that the soul sustains itself in mid-air and flies upward. (2) "They shall run." Have you ever noticed how the servants of God in the Bible—from Abraham and David to Philip in the Acts—whenever they were told to do anything, always ran. It is the only way to do anything well. A thousand irksome duties become easy and pleasant if we do them runningly, that is, with a ready mind, an affectionate zeal, and a happy alacrity. (3) But there is something beyond this. It is more difficult to walk than to run. To maintain a quiet sustained walk, day by day, in the common things of life, in the house and out of the house, not impulsive, not capricious, not changeable,—that is the hardest thing to do. Let me give four rules for this walk: (*a*) Start from Christ; (*b*) walk with Christ; (*c*) walk leaning on Christ; (*d*) walk to Christ.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 10th series, p. 279.

Chap. xl., ver. 31.—"But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."

I. THIS is the gospel of the exile, the "gospel before the gospel," the good news of the swift accession of power and deliverance to the Jewish people, humiliated, dispirited, and tired out by monotonously waiting in their Babylonian captivity for a long-expected, long-delayed good.

II. Like all gospels, this gospel of the exile is God's. God, in His loving care for a constant education of souls, is the Alpha and Omega of this whole gospel for captive Israel.

III. Like all Divine evangels, this good news for the captives of Babylon is addressed immediately to a special need, and

adapted by its form to effect a particular result, viz., that of patient endurance of acute affliction, steadfast resistance to cowardly fears and weakening apprehension, brave battling with anxiety and carewornness, a resolute and determined climb towards the sunny heights and clear expanses of cheerfulness and joy. "Wait for God" is the ever-recurring and all-luminous word of the exile-gospel.

IV. Like all gospels from the heavens, this one for the Hebrew exiles obtained its full and complete verification from the uncontradicted facts of human experience. The sevenfold blessing of the exile stands written in the chronicles of Israel and of the world. (1) First, and most distinctive of the gains of the Jews from their captivity, stands their advanced and perfected knowledge of God. (2) Next comes up out of the exile the more definitely shaped and clearly conceived image of the Anointed of the Lord, the Daysman or Mediator, the Lord our Righteousness, the Herald of a new covenant, the suffering and conquering servant of God, who is to realise the ideal Jerusalem, and bring a new heaven and a new earth. (3) Fired by this hope of a personal Redeemer, and controlled by a spiritual conception of Jehovah, the worship of God entered on that final spiritual phase which has never been wholly eclipsed, though it has suffered, and still suffers, many painful obscurations. (4) Bound up with this we see the generation of a higher ethic, the birth of a nobler conception of life, as the sphere for rightness of aim and righteousness of character. (5) The temporary limitations and restrictions of Israel being removed, it is forthwith lifted into the stream of universal history, never to be taken out again as long as sun and moon endure. (6) The missionary *spirit*, as well as the missionary *idea*, glows and throbs in the oracles and songs which represent the highest thought and the purest emotion of this time. (7) This was completed by the enlargement and recension of that unique and marvellous missionary agent, the Old Testament literature.

V. This gospel, like all its fellows, never dies. It endures for ever and ever as a living message, not effete though old, not wasted though abundantly used, but partaking of the unwearied energy and eternal reproductiveness of its Infinite Source.

J. CLIFFORD, *Daily Strength for Daily Living*, p. 241.

Chap. xl., ver. 31.—"They shall run, and not be weary."

I. PHYSICAL weariness is the least part of the weariness of our

world. The extent and the depth of heart-weariness is greater than complaint ever utters. There is a hidden, dull, weary, aching weariness in souls everywhere, which never reveals itself.

II. Hope in God is a quenchless hope for our essential, enduring nature, if we can come home to it—a hope that is capable of being re-born and new-born after every disappointment and death. It is a childlike confidence that we are heirs of our Father's estate, and as a matter of birthright entitled to His friendship.

III. Those who wait upon God, and daily lay open their souls to His Spirit and working, know that a new nature is forming in them, and to that nature, in the proper sphere of God's kingdom, all our hopes will be fulfilled. They that wait on God *do* mount up, they do leave earth's weariness and despair far beneath them.

IV. A new will against all base earthborn inclinations, and a piercing intelligence beyond anything that the natural mind knows, are direct results of intercourse with God. They are virtues of the Divine Breath in man. "They shall mount up with wings as eagles." They are practising little daily ascensions before the day of the great ascension comes. They will come to life's full cup, for they taste it already. God means Human Blessedness; and as often as they mount up into the fine air of His presence, the blessedness meets them and creates new assurance in their breast.

J. PULSFORD, *Our Deathless Hope*, p. 126.

REFERENCES: xl. 31.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 270; F. Tucker, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 439; *Short Sermons for Family Reading*, p. 425; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 876, vol. xxix., No. 1756; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 219; J. H. Anderson, *Ibid.*, vol. iii., p. 84; J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 6th series, p. 49.

Chap. xli., ver. 1.—"Keep silence before me, O islands; and let the people renew their strength: let them come near; then let them speak."

GOD addresses men here by two designations, the one having reference to their remoteness and isolation, and the other to their unity. To the Hebrew all distant places were islands. They were afar, scattered and lonely. Keeping silence before God and renewing strength are duties prescribed to all men, as are also the coming near and the speaking. The series of injunctions begins with silence and ends in speech.

I. Silence before God. (1) Shall we not be silent in the endeavour to realise that God is, and what He is? Unless we can bear to be silent and brood, the thought of God will not rise before us in fulness and splendour. (2) God speaks and we must listen in silence. With what glad silence should we listen to the Divine voice! Every one that would be truly in heart and soul God's must have times when he is purely passive and recipient, letting the word of God, in small select portions, drop into his soul in silence, his only effort being to realise that God is speaking. (3) Our silence in the presence of God will often take the form of thinking of ourselves. Thinking of self becomes sincere and profitable when it goes on consciously in God's presence.

II. Speech to God, following upon the silence. Silence before God leads to a stirring of the soul, a forth-putting of endeavour and a drawing nearer to God. Silence before God heaps a load on the heart, which can only be thrown off by speaking to God. Words before God give a relief that nothing else can. The relief will be in proportion to the entireness of the outpouring and to the nearness to God. If a man does not come near to God in confidence and trust, the relief obtained even by thousands of words will be small. But coming near to God and speaking to Him will relieve any soul, however burdened. And much more than freedom from pressure will be experienced. The convictions that gather in silence will be strengthened by speech. If they did not find expression they would begin to decay. Light injures roots, but it is needed for branches. In silence there is the rooting of conviction, but in speaking to God its expansion and growth.

J. LECKIE, *Sermons Preached at Ibrox*, p. 81.

REFERENCES: xli. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1215; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 2.

Chap. xli., ver. 4.—"I the Lord, the First, and with the Last; I am He."

I. LOOK at God in His primary relation to His creature. "I the Lord, First." Understand clearly that everything which is was first an idea in the mind of God. Thence, by a creative act, it came forth and took form and being. So God was First, long before all His works—as the mould is before the castings. Here is the truth and glory of predestination, that great argument of all comfort. It places God far away, beyond our little horizon, in advance of everything. Whatever is, is to fulfil its preordained purpose; each thing coming up and rising in its

turn; everything a reflection of the eternal love, care, and wisdom, which dwelt from everlasting in the mind of God.

II. "With the Last." God is the God of the years that are past. There are those who say, "This world is on the decline and growing worse." Can it be, if He who was First is with the Last—the same God yesterday, to-day, and for ever, the equal portion of all times? Is it not sufficient argument? The golden age cannot be over. From the fleeting and the changing, from the disappointing and the dying, I yearn to ask, "Where is the true?" Where is that which my soul wants, and for which my restless spirit has so long been craving, what shall satisfy my immortality? And the answer comes, as a whisper in the desert, louder and clearer from the solitude of my heart's waste places, "I the Lord, the First, and with the Last; I am He."

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 8th series, p. 149.

Chap. xli., vers. 6, 7.—"They helped every one his neighbour; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage."

I. ENCOURAGEMENT must be lived as well as spoken.

II. Encourgement must begin at the nearest point.

III. Encouragement must not be merely seasonal.

IV. Encouragement must not be withdrawn by frequent failures.

V. Encouragement must be true, based on reasons.

W. M. STATHAM, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 408.

REFERENCES: xli. 7.—E. P. Thring, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 136. xli. 9.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 138.

Chap. xli., ver. 10.—"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee."

GOD can be God and fearless, but we can scarcely be creatures and fearless. Still less is it likely that sinful creatures should be fearless. It is more than the Father looks for under the present mode of our existence. But when the fearful thing is coming down, or when the children see it looming in the distance and are frightened, and they catch the Father's countenance, and see that He is not frightened, it wonderfully reassures the poor children to see a fearlessness on the Father's face. Heaven is full of "Fear nots." And if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, it will break out of your midnight, and up from your deepest valley too, that voice of the Father, the All-in-all.

I. Of course the meaning of the word is, in the first place, that God is our All-sufficiency, and not disrelated but related to us. God, the Creator, who has related the universal deficiency to His own universal all-sufficiency, from a blade of grass up and up and up to immortal spirits, and Himself the Father, is Himself nearer to you than any other thing which He has made. Behold that blade of grass. Is it not bathed every moment with what it needs? Does it not touch it? Does not the atmosphere press sweetly round about its edge and ask to be received, and give itself into the myriads of little mouths of the blade of grass that it may lift itself up and be strong? So can we lie in God's bosom. We are His children. It only needs to be quiet enough to feel the throbbing of the eternal heart against me, and the instreaming of the fountain spirit through all the avenues and channels of my being.

II. Consider the use the children should make of this sufficiency of their Father. See what liberties we take with God's earth. We get stones wherever we like. They are not our stones. And we get gold wherever we like, and we get iron wherever we like, and we get coal wherever we can. I hope the day will come when, even without thought or intention, we shall, from the new nature of our being, take up God as easily as the blade of grass takes up atmosphere and light. Let us enter our home—enter and be comforted, as all helpless things are, to find their source of supply so near. And let us not leave our nest and then fret that our rest is gone, but abide encircled by the everlasting strength.

J. PULSFORD, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 729.

REFERENCES: **xli. 10.**—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. vii., p. 1; A. Maclaren, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 201; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 930, vol. xiii., No. 670; *Ibid., Morning by Morning*, p 357; A. M. Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 353; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 351.

Chap. xli., ver. 13.—"For I the Lord thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee."

COURAGE, its source and necessity.

I. Its source. You can scarcely fail to observe the broad sense of the Divine presence and aid which is expressed by the figures of the promise we have read, "I will hold thy right hand." The grasp of the hand is significant of close and present friendship, of the living nearness of the Deliverer. And that sense of God's presence, so near that our faith can touch

His hand and hear the deep still music of His voice—realised as it may be in Christ, is the source of a courage which no danger can dispel, no suffering exhaust, and no death destroy. The clearest way of illustrating this will be to take the higher forms of courage among men, and observe what states of soul are most conducive to it. (1) Beginning with the courage of active resistance, we find its great element in the fixed survey of the means of conquest. Fear rises from the contemplation of difficulties, courage from the perception of the thing to be done. Rise now to spiritual courage, and the same principle holds true. It is by the aid of God that we conquer in spiritual battle; our reliance is on the constant influence of His strengthening grace. And while our gaze is fixed on that, fear vanishes. (2) Passing on to the courage needful for passive endurance, we find that its great feature is self-surrender to the highest law of life. The Christian endures, because the law of his being has become resignation to the will of God.

II. Notice the necessity for this courage. It is essential to Christian life for three reasons. (1) It requires courage to manifest the Christian character before men. (2) It requires courage to maintain steadfast obedience to the will of God. (3) It demands courage to hold fast to our highest aspirations.

E. L. Hull, *Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 157.

References: xli. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., Nos. 156, 157; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 16. xli. 17, 18.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 353 xli. 22.—W. M. Punshon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 205.

Chap. xlii., ver. 1.—"Behold My Servant."

The servitude of Jesus.

I. In Christ, service and freedom were perfectly combined. He gave the service of being, the service of work, the service of suffering, the service of worship, the service of rest, each to the very highest point of which that service is capable. But when He came, knowing, as He did, all to which He was coming, He came with these words upon His lips, "I delight to do it."

II. Christ had many masters, and He served them all with perfect service. (1) There was His own high purpose, which had armed Him for His mission, and never by a hair's-breadth did He ever swerve from that. (2) And there was the law. The law had no right over Christ, and yet how He served the law, in every requirement, moral, political, ceremonial, to the

smallest tittle. (3) And there was death, that fearful master with his giant hand. Step by step, inch by inch, slowly, measuredly, He put Himself under its spell, He obeyed its mandate, and He owned its power. (4) And to His Heavenly Father what a true Servant He was, not only in fulfilling all the Father's will, but as He did it, in always tracing to Him all the power, and giving back to Him all the glory.

III. There is a depth of beauty and power, of liberty and humiliation, of abandonment and love, in that word "servant," which none ever know who have not considered it as one of the titles of Jesus. But there is another name of Jesus, very dear to His people, "the Master." To understand "the Master" you must yourself have felt "the Servant."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 9th series, p. 27.

REFERENCES: xlii. 1, 2.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 17. xlii. 1-4.—W. M. Punshon, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 871 (see also *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 206); W. Hubbard, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 291; C. Short, *Ibid.*, vol. xv., p. 241.

Chap. xlii., ver. 3 (with Matt. xii., ver. 20).—"A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth."

I. THE first reference of this passage is to Christ's cause *in the world*. Thus interpreted, the passage is full of inspiration to each Christian philanthropist. Christ's cause—the cause of virtuous happiness here on earth, and of glory to God in the highest—this cause, amidst its seeming feebleness, is divinely secure. The same principle pervades the Lord's dealing with each individual soul. The entire eventual holiness of His people—*i.e.* their perfection in knowledge, faith, and goodness—is the Saviour's steadfast purpose; and in carrying out that purpose He exerts an unwearying and victorious patience.

II. Those who are seeking salvation should (1) avoid what would quench the smoking flax. There are regions so very cold, the icy realms of everlasting winter, that it is hardly possible to get anything to ignite. And so it is with cold companions. You will find that religion perishes whenever you walk in the counsel of the ungodly or stand in the way of sinners. (2) When once a brand of wick is fairly lighted, its tendency is to aid its own incandescence and keep up its clearer shining. And so the grace which has already grown most is likely to be most growthful; the piety which has become habitual will be not only permanent but progressive. For

a smoking flax there is no specific like heaven's oxygen; for a faint and flickering piety there is no cure comparable to the one without which all our exertions are but an effort to light a lamp *in vacuo*—the breath of the Holy Spirit.

J. HAMILTON, *Works*, vol. vi., p. 178.

Chap. xlii., ver. 3.

THE lesson which this passage teaches is that the Saviour is infinite in kindness.

I. The sinner is obscure, but the Saviour is omniscient.

II. The sinner is a thing of grief and guilt, but the Saviour is gentleness and grace impersonate.

III. The sinner is in himself worthless, but the Saviour is mighty; and out of the most worthless can make a vessel of mercy meet for the Master's use.

J. HAMILTON, *Works*, vol. vi., p. 164.

THE source of Christ's perfect tenderness to sinners is none other than the Divine compassion. It was the love and pity of the Word made flesh. It teaches us, however, some great truths, full of instruction, which we will now consider.

I. It is plain that this gentle reception even of the greatest sinners implies that, where there is so much as a spark of life in the conscience, there is possibility of an entire conversion to God. Where there is room to hope anything, there is room to hope all things. Such is the mysterious nature of the human spirit, of its affections and will, such its energies and intensity, that it may at any time be so renewed by the spirit of the new creation as to expel, with the most perfect rejection, all the powers, qualities, visions, and thoughts of evil.

II. Another great truth implied in our Lord's conduct to sinners is, that the only sure way of fostering the beginning of repentance is to receive them with gentleness and compassion. On those in whom there is the faintest stirring of repentance the love of Christ falls with a soft but penetrating force. To receive sinners coldly, or with an averted eye, an estranged heart, and a hasty, unsparing tongue, will seldom fail to drive them into defiance or self-abandonment. A sinner that is out of hope is lost. Hope is the last thing left. If this be crushed the flax is extinct. Truth told without love is perilous in the measure in which it is true. There is in every sinner a great burden of misery, soreness, and alarm; but even these, instead of driving him to confession, make him shut himself up in

a fevered and brooding fear. And it was in this peculiar wretchedness of sin that the gentleness of our Lord gave them courage and hope. It was a strange courage that came upon them; a boldness without trembling, yet an awe without alarm. What little motions of good were in them, what little stirrings of conscience, what faint remainder of better resolutions, what feeble gleams of all but extinguished light,—all seemed to revive, and to turn in sympathy towards some source of kindred nature, and to stretch itself out in hope to something long desired, with a dim unconscious love. It is an affinity of the spirit working in penitents with the Spirit of Christ that made them draw to Him. It was not only because of His infinite compassion as God that Christ so dealt with sinners; but because, knowing the nature of man, its strange depths and windings, its weakness and fears, He knew that this was the surest way of winning them to Himself.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 377.

REFERENCES: xlii. 3.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 19; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 18.

Chap. xlii., vers. 3, 4.

I. CONSIDER, first, the representation of the servant of the Lord as the restorer of the bruise that it may not be broken. "He shall not break the bruised reed." Here is the picture. A slender bulrush, growing by the margin of some tarn or pond, its sides crushed and dinted in by some outward power, some gust of wind, some sudden blow, the foot of some passing animal. The head is hanging by a thread, but it is not yet snapped or broken off from the stem. And so, says my text, there are reeds bruised and shaken by the wind, but yet not broken. And the tender Christ comes with His gentle, wise, skilful surgery, to bind these up and to make them strong again. The text applies (1) to mankind generally, (2) especially to those whose hearts have been crushed by the consciousness of their sins.

II. Look next at the completing thought that is here in the second clause, which represents Christ as the Fosterer of incipient and imperfect good. "The dimly burning wick He shall not quench." There is something in the nature of every man which corresponds to this dim flame that needs to be fostered in order to blaze brightly abroad. In a narrower sense the words may be applied to a class. There are some of us who have in us a little spark, as we believe, of a Divine life, the faint beginnings

of a Christian character. We call ourselves Christ's disciples. We are; but how dimly the flax burns. How do you make "smoking flax" burn? You give it oil, you give it air, and you take away the charred portions. And Christ will give you, in your feebleness, the oil of His Spirit, that you may burn brightly as one of the candlesticks in His temple; and He will let air in, and take away the charred portions, by the wise discipline of sorrow and trial sometimes, in order that the smoking flax may become the shining light.

III. Lastly, we have the representation of the servant of the Lord as exempt from human evil and weakness, as the foundation of His restoring and fostering work. "He shall not burn dimly nor be broken till He hath set judgment in the earth." There are no bruises in this reed. Christ's manhood is free from all scars and wounds of evil or of sin. There is no dimness in this light. Christ's character is perfect. His goodness needs no increase. And because of these things, because of His perfect exemption from human infirmity, because in Him was no sin, He is manifested to take away our sins.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, Jan. 28th, 1886.

REFERENCES: xlii. 4.—Archbishop Benson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 232; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 20, vol. x., p. 288. xlii. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 986. xlii. 9.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxv., No. 1508.

Chap. xlii., vers. 14-16.—**"I will destroy and devour at once. I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs: and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools. And I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known," etc.**

THE solemn practical truth of the text is that God can do the most terrible things and the most gentle; that power belongeth unto God and also mercy; that He is either glorious as heaven or fearful as hell.

I. Look at the doctrine of the text in relation to bad men who pride themselves upon their success and their strength. The doctrine of the text is that there is a Power beyond man's, and that nothing is held safely which is not held by consent of that Power. As he would be infinitely foolish who should build his house without thinking of the natural forces that will try its strength, so is he cursed with insanity who builds his character without thinking of the fire with which God will try every man's

work of what sort it is. The so-called success of the bad man has yet to stand the strain of Divine trial. Though his strength be as a mountain, it shall be wasted; though it be as a hill it shall be blown away, and the world shall see how poorly they build who build only for the light and quietness of summer. Remember, we are not stronger than our weakest point, and that true wisdom binds us to watch even the least gate that is insufficient or insecure.

II. Look at the doctrine of the text as an encouragement to all men who work under the guidance of God. God declares Himself gentle to those who truly need Him. He promises nothing to the self-sufficient; He promises much to the needy. The text shows the principle on which Divine help is given to men,—the principle of conscious need and of willingness to be guided. A true apprehension of this doctrine will give us a new view of daily providences, viz., that men who are apparently most destitute may in reality be most richly enjoying the blessings of God. Clearly, we are not to judge human life by outward conditions. Blindness may not be merely so much defect, it may be but another condition of happiness. It is *because* we are blind that He will lead us. It is *because* we are weak that He will carry us. It is *because* we have nothing that He offers to give us all things.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1870, p. 277.

REFERENCES: xlii. 16.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 32, Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 847, vol. xxii., No. 1310.

Chap. xliii., vers. 1-3.

IN this text we have

1. A charge given—"Fear not." A righteous, godly fear the believer may have; but the cowardice of the world, which is loud to boast, and slow to act, and quick to doubt—which is prone to distrust even the Almighty and disbelieve the All-true—this he must never know. It becomes neither the dignity of his calling nor the faithfulness of his God.

II. A reason assigned—"Thou art Mine." These words were spoken to Israel after the flesh, and to them they still remain a covenant of peace, sure and steadfast for ever; yet as the relations named—Creator, Redeemer, and Saviour—are not peculiar to them, but are enjoyed in the same degree by every believing heart, we may safely take to ourselves a share in this animating promise. The certainty of the believer's hope does not depend

on our holding God, but on God's holding us, not on our faithfulness to Him, but on His faithfulness to us.

III. A protection promised. This does not consist in any absence of trial and danger; the expressions of the text rather imply their presence, many in number and various in kind. The protection promised in the text consists in the constant presence with the soul of its unseen but Almighty Saviour. The preserving hand will never be withdrawn, and the grace of the Comforter will strengthen and cheer the soul still in its sorest times of difficulty and distress.

E. GARBETT, *The Soul's Life*, p. 204.

REFERENCES: xliii. 1.—R. Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 88. xliii. 1-4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1895.

Chap. xliii., ver. 2 (with Dan. iii.).

THE text contains

I. A pre-intimation of trouble. Although we have not in it a distinct assertion or prediction of particular trials, yet it is most clearly and strongly implied that the chosen people would have to go through them. God never deceives us. He never foresees one thing for us and tells us to expect another. He meets us, so to speak, in plainness and candour, and He says, My ways are ways of *ultimate* happiness, but not of *proximate*. Tribulation is the very cause of religion's peculiar blessedness,—the very parent and producer of its inconceivable peace. Those who have most of the sorrow invariably taste most of the joy.

II. A promise of Divine succour and deliverance. The very same passage that intimates sorrow and leads us to expect persecution for the sake of Christ, assures us also most encouragingly of strength equal to our day, and of grace to help in every time of need. The promise assures us (1) of the Saviour's sympathy in our trials, "I will be with thee." What Jesus promises to His chosen is not the mere succour of *aid*—it is the succour of a helpful sympathy. (2) Mark the kind of sympathy it is. It is not the sympathy of weakness that can only weep with us, but hath no power to give us assistance. But this is the remarkable and blessed thing in the sympathy of Christ—it is human sympathy allied to Almighty power. This sympathising Son of God is the Creator and Controller of flood and fire. There is promised to all His tried and faithful servants both succour and salvation, defence and deliverance.

R. GLOVER, *By the Waters of Babylon*, p. 133.

REFERENCES: xliii. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 397;

R. Glover, *By the Waters of Babylon*, p. 133. xliii. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1831. xliii. 4.—*Ibid.*, vol. xvi., No. 917, vol. xxviii., No. 1671; xliii. 6.—*Ibid.*, vol. xvii., No. 1007; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 296. xliii. 10.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 52; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 229, vol. xii., p. 134; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 106; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 644; J. Hall, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 270; J. Kennedy, *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 424. xliii. 16.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 354. xliii. 19.—T. Stephenson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 209. xliii. 21.—J. J. West, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 348; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 165.

Chap. xliii., ver. 22.—"Thou hast been weary of Me, O Israel."

I. The nature of this evil. To be weary of God is to desire to break the connection that exists between us and God. It is to be impatient of continued connection with Him; to be tired of calling upon Him; tired of thinking of Him; tired of trusting Him; tired of waiting for Him; tired of serving Him.

II. The nature of this weariness will appear further if you look for a moment at the forms in which it is shown. (1) This weariness is first shown by formality in Divine worship, (2) in the outward neglect of Divine requirements, (3) in not looking to God for aid and succour, (4) in the setting up of false gods.

III. What is the occasion of the manifestation of this weariness? You will generally find one of the following things—disappointed hope, the endurance of affliction, or the prosperity of the wicked.

IV. God's dealings, God's dispensations, may be the occasion of the springing up of this weariness, but we cannot charge it upon God. Its cause is to be found either in the absence of love or in the feebleness of love.

V. Look at the bitter fruits of this weariness. God sees it, and He cannot see it without feeling it, that would be impossible. What feeling, therefore, must spring up in the Divine nature? It cannot be joy and it cannot be complacency. What can it be but anger, what but displeasure? And displeasure does arise. God is angry and He corrects, and He corrects so as to make the chastisement answer to the sin. The man has, to a certain extent, withdrawn from God—God withdraws from the man. He deprives the man of whatever influences are tending to promote his peace and joy and rest. And if the heart be alive, if it be a quickened heart, this state is one of great misery until the soul is restored to God.

VI. What is the prevention, or rather, the means of prevention? Ejecting the first hard thoughts of God, not yielding for

a moment to indolence in the service of God; following Christ implicitly in the conduct of the spirit towards God; cherishing most sacredly the influences of the Holy Spirit.

VII. And when you have fallen into this evil state, what is its cure? (1) The full confession of the weariness. (2) Admission of the Divine goodness in the correction by which you are made sensible of your weariness. (3) Return to the careful observances of God's ordinances and precepts, the obtaining of pardon, and the assurance of forgiveness.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 1st series, No. 19.

REFERENCES: xliii. 22-24.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1895. xliii. 24.—*Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 144.

Chap. xliii., vers. 24, 25.—"Thou hast bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled Me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities," etc.

I. CONSIDER the ground on which Israel is reproached. Sweet cane, or calamus, is an aromatic reed which was an exotic in in Palestine, and is chiefly to be found in India. The demand for sweet cane was great, because it formed an ingredient of the incense in most countries where incense was used. It was one of the things which could not be obtained by barter. The charge is, "You do not neglect the offices of religion, but you perform them carelessly; you do not withhold your offerings, but you do not offer of your best." Bad is the best that man has to offer to God; but less than our best God will not accept.

II. When did the King eternal, immortal, invisible, serve? When was God, the Omnipotent, wearied with our iniquities? When did the Judge of the earth blot out our sins? We, enlightened by the gospel, can give an answer which Israel of old could not. We answer, "Then, when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," when God in the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity became incarnate. He came to serve, and when we think of Him, the God-Man, serving under the law, is it possible for us to ask, in the spirit of a slave, How *little* can I render unto the Lord for all His benefits? what is the *least* that He demands, the minimum of duty? The great principle is this, that we never offer unto the Lord what costs us nothing, or what involves no thought or trouble. He will not accept the refuse at our hands. And this principle we are to carry out in all that relates to our moral conduct and religious life. It is applicable to our private devotions as well as to our public

services. It is implied in our Lord's injunction, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

W. F. HOOK, *Parish Sermons*, p. 186.

Chap. xliii., ver. 25.—"I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."

THERE is one thing that God always does with sin. He removes it out of His presence. God cannot dwell with sin. When He casts away the guilty soul into an unapproachable distance, and when He pardons a penitent soul and lays it upon His bosom, He is doing the same thing equally in both cases,—He is removing sin absolutely and infinitely.

I. Consider the Author of forgiveness. The expression, "I, even I," is not a very unfrequent one in Holy Scripture; but wherever it occurs—whether in reference to justice or to mercy—it is the mark of the Almighty, at that moment taking to Himself, in some special degree, some sovereign prerogative. Here, the magnificent repetition of that name, first given in the bush, was evidently intended to show one characteristic feature of God's love. He forgives like a sovereign. All His attributes are brought to bear upon our peace. The pardoned sinner stands upon the Eternal, leans upon the Infinite, and looks out upon the unfading.

II. The nature of forgiveness. (1) As to time. Observe, the verb runs in the present tense—"I, even I, am He that *blotteth* out thy transgressions." (2) As to degree. "Blot out." You could not read—Satan could not read—a trace where God's obliterating hand has once passed. (3) As to continuance. In the text the present swells out into the future. He "blotteth out and will not remember."

III. The reason of forgiveness. Look back and find it in that eternal counsel, wherein, before all worlds, God gave to His dear Son a kingdom and a people. Look forward and find it in God's will, that there shall be a multitude of washed saints around the throne of His glory, who shall be sending up praises to Him for ever and ever. Seek it in that unfathomable love in which He is the Father—the loving Father—of every creature He has made.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 279.

REFERENCES: xliii. 25.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 94; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i., No. 24, vol. xix., No. 1142, vol. xxviii., No. 1685. xliii. 25-28.—C. Short, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ix., p. 50.

Chap. xliii., ver. 26.—"Put Me in remembrance: let Us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified."

I. We cannot but remark at once on the apparent strangeness that there should be any appeal to reason or argument where the matter involved is undoubtedly the great doctrine of atonement or propitiation. A forgiveness based on a propitiation, and followed by sanctification, is what God propounds as His scheme of redemption, and such a scheme He invites us to discuss with Him in person. Let reason put forth all her shrewdness; there is no fear but that an answer will be furnished by your antagonist in this high debate. But if all the difficulties which reason can find in the way of redemption lie either in the necessities of man or the attributes of God, and if the scheme of redemption through Christ meet the first and yield the second, so that even reason herself can perceive that it satisfies every human want and compromises no Divine perfection, why should we not allow that, reason herself being judge, the gospel is in every respect precisely such a communication as is suited to the case?

II. The concluding words of the text, "Declare thou, that thou mayest be justified," seem to allow you, if you choose, to bring forward any excuse which you may have for not closing with that gracious proffer of salvation through Christ. Whilst we promise you upon the authority of revelation that God will blot out your transgressions and not remember your sins, we call on you to break away from evil habits, forsake evil ways, and attend to righteous duties. And here you think you have ground of objection. Well, urge it. It is God Himself who saith, "Declare thou, that thou mayest be justified." But the answer is, that the persons to whom God will communicate additional grace are those who in obedience to His call are straining every nerve to forsake evil ways. It is not that they are able of themselves to work out a moral amendment, but it is that He intends to bestow on them the ability while they are making the effort. We may, however, take another and perhaps equally just view of the controversy, which is indicated, though not laid open, by our text. Come, all of you who think you are in any way hardly dealt with by God. Approach and plead your cause. Keep nothing back; be as minute as you will in exposing the harshness of God's dealings, whether individually with yourselves or generally with mankind; and then, having pleaded your own cause, listen to the beautiful promise, "I, even

I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2299.

Chap. xliv., vers. 1, 2.—"Yet now hear, O Jacob My servant; and Israel whom I have chosen: . . . Fear not, O Jacob, My servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen."

THE occurrence of the three names, "Jacob, Israel, Jesurun," together is very remarkable, and the order in which they stand is not accidental. The prophet begins with the name that belonged to the patriarch by birth; the name of nature, which contained some indications of character. He passes on to the name which commemorated the mysterious conflict where, as a prince, he had power with God and prevailed. He ends with the name of Jesurun, of which the meaning is "the righteous one," and which was bestowed upon the people as a reminder of what they ought to be.

I. These three names in their order teach us, first, the path of transformation. Every Jacob may become a righteous one, if he will tread Jacob's road. There must be a Peniel between the two halves of the character if there is to be transformation. Jacob must become Israel before he is Jesurun; he must hold communion with God in Christ before he is clothed with righteousness.

II. Here we may find expressed the law for the Christian life. The order of these names here points the lesson that the apex of the pyramid, the goal of the whole course, is righteousness. The object for which the whole majestic structure of revelation has been builded up is simply to make good men and women.

III. Notice the merciful judgment which God makes of the character of them that love Him, Jesurun means "the righteous one." How far beneath the ideal of the name these Jewish people fell we all know, and yet the name is applied to them. Although the realisation of the ideal has been so imperfect, the ideal is not destroyed. Although they have done so many sins, yet He calls them by His name of righteous. And so we Christian people find that the New Testament calls us saints. He who sees not as men see beholds the inmost tendencies and desires of the nature, as well as the facts of the life, and discerning the inmost and true self of His children, and knowing that it will conquer, calls us "righteous ones," even while the

outward life has not yet been brought into harmony with the new man, created in righteousness after God's image.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, Feb. 5th, 1885.

REFERENCES: xliv. 1-5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 564. xliv. 3.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 102; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 311. xliv. 3, 4.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 407. xliv. 3-5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1151.

Chap. xliv., ver. 6.—"Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last, and beside Me there is no God."

I. "I AM the first." (1) We find in this the affirmation of the fundamental doctrine of a Supreme God, the Creator of all things. (2) This reminds us, further, that as God is the supreme cause, He must also be the supreme end of all that exists, the centre of the thoughts and affections of all the beings He has created. (3) This means, further, that God is at the basis of all that is done to raise and save humanity, to bring it back to the true life which it has lost by separating itself from Him.

II. "I am the last." By this we must understand (1) that God never abdicates, and that He shall ever remain the Supreme Master, when all the lords of a day shall have passed away after having made a little noise in the world. (2) This means, further, that God remains the Supreme Judge, and that consequently the hour of justice shall certainly strike. (3) This reminds us again that God is the supreme refuge of every soul that calls upon Him, the only one which remains standing when all others have disappeared.

E. BERSIER, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 350.

REFERENCES: xliv. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1377. xliv. 8.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 319; Bishop Walsham How, *Plain Words*, 2nd series, p. 39.

Chap. xliv., ver. 20.—"He cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

THESE two thoughts act and re-act upon each other. The lie in the right hand fetters, hopelessly fetters, the soul, while the enslaved soul, because it is enslaved, cannot discover "the lie" of its hand.

I. Consider what is the force of that expression, "a lie in the right hand." A lie in the hand must mean a lie concealed—a lie inside the hand, held, but covered. And as the right hand is the emblem of strength in a man, it conveys that the lie is

strongly and resolutely held. The right hand is what God has promised to hold, therefore the right hand shadows out that by which God apprehends us, and by which we apprehend God. But how shall God hold that which is preoccupied? How shall God guide or comfort or uphold a man who has a lie in his right hand? Such a man shuts himself out, at once, of all contact with God, and therefore out of all blessing; and leaving himself to himself, necessarily falls.

II. The religion of many of us is, simply, a passive thing—that is, it begins and ends in impressions and feelings which we have received; or if it go further at all, it is only in acts of worship and devotion. It does not lead to self-denying acts of love—it does not include separation from the world—it is the same sort of religion which heathen religions generally are, religions of worship and feeling, and not religions that affect the life. But while you only so worship and feel, while the kingdom of God is never advanced by you, you may indeed call yourselves religious, but that word is a lie in that idle right hand of yours. It needs but very little to be honest in the search of truth, and you will find truth; it needs very little else but simplicity of faith, with earnestness to be saved; it needs nothing but to be true to God, to receive His blessing, and to be admitted into all His promises.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 360.

REFERENCES: xliv. 20.—H. Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. i., p. 299; J. Thain Davidson, *Forewarned—Forearmed*, p. 163. xliv. 21, 22.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 18. xliv. 21-23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1895.

Chap. xliv., ver. 22.—"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto Me; for I have redeemed thee."

I. WE find in these words a wonderful teaching as to the inmost nature of sin. I refer especially here to the two words for sin which are employed here. That translated "transgression" literally means "treachery" or "rebellion;" and that translated sin "missing a mark." All sin is treacherous rebellion. That is to say, it has relation not only to a law, but to a lawgiver. It is not merely a departure from what is right, it is treason against God. And then, still further, the other word which is employed here conveys a profound and a tragic lesson. All sin misses the mark. Whoever transgresses against conscience and God misses the true aim and scope of his life. Every sin is a deflection from that which ought to be

the goal of all that we do. And more than that, not only does each transgression miss the true aim of life, but it also misses what it aims at. All iniquity is a blunder as well as a crime.

II. The second thought is one conveyed by the form in which the promise is given us, viz., the permanent record of sin —"I have *blotted out.*" That points, of course, to something that has been written, and which it promises shall be erased. There is a book written, a permanent record of our evil-doing. Where is it written? Where, rather, is it not written? Written on character, written to a very large extent on circumstances, written above all in the calm, perfect memory of the all-judging God. The book is written by ourselves, moment by moment, and day by day.

III. There is another thought, and that is the darkening power of sin. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud," says the text. Like a misty veil drawn across the face of the heavens are man's sins. That emblem has a double truth in it, viz., that every evil deed tends to obscure and to hide from us the face of God; and also that every evil deed tends to unfit us for the reception of the blessings that come down from above.

IV. The last thought is the removal of the sin. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins." The erasure implies the making a clean sheet of the blurred page; the cancelling of the whole long formidable column that expresses the debt. The blotting out as a cloud implies the disappearing of the misty vapour, as some thin fleecy film will do in the dry Eastern heavens, melting away as a man looks. God treats all my iniquity of the past as non-existent, and He pours Himself upon me in order that all the evil that still haunts my spirit may be utterly expelled and driven forth.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, Nov. 19th, 1885.

I. NOTICE, first, the divineness of forgiveness. God removes the clouds, and God alone. The dispensation of pardon is too precious to be entrusted either to men or to angels. The Father has given authority to pardon to His Son, but to none other.

II. Look at the completeness of pardon. In the country which Isaiah knew the clouds were entirely blotted out during four months of the year, and the clearness of the atmosphere

enabled the prophet to appreciate this illustration to an extent impossible to us. When God pardons a man there is not a sin to be seen.

III. Look at the assurance which God gives the pardoned that they are forgiven. God might forgive without telling us now that He has pardoned us. He might pardon secretly, but He pardons, giving knowledge of forgiveness, to those whose transgressions He covers. Now what profit is there in this? (1) Knowledge of pardon is a particular knowledge of God. (2) Knowledge of pardon is a source of joy and peace. (3) Knowledge of pardon is a power awakening love. (4) Knowledge of pardon is a motive to the pursuit of holiness. (5) Knowledge of pardon encourages us to bring others to God.

IV. Who are the assured? (1) Those who confess their sins. (2) Those who forsake their sins. (3) Those who turn to God. "Let him *turn* to the Lord and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 3rd series, No. 11.

I. IN this text there is recognised the existence of sin. The individuals to whom this gracious promise was addressed had been guilty of enormous and aggravated rebellion; their transgressions had gathered blackness and density; they were "as a thick cloud," and as a "cloud." The Gospel proceeds altogether upon the basis of an entire and universal depravity. "It assimilates all varieties of human character into one common condition of guilt, need, and helplessness." It recognises but two varieties of character here, and but two varieties of condition in the world beyond the grave.

II. There is affirmed the existence of mercy. Scarcely had the fall defiled the world and entailed its heritage of wrath and shame before the first promise of grace was breathed. When man sinned, perverted his nature, corrupted his way, bereft himself of every love-compelling quality, became utterly defiled and unworthy, then grace came in a new fountain struck out of the Godhead, a new idea for the wonder and homage of the universe. All former displays which God had made of Himself were ascents to higher elevation. This was a mightier putting forth of His perfections, inasmuch as it showed not only how high the love of God could rise, but how deeply the mercy of God could go down; not only the glorious fellowship of angels which it could fill with its rejoicing, but the branded and down-

trodden outcasts to whom it could stoop and uplift them from hell into heaven.

W. MORLEY PUNSHON, *Sermons*, p. 205; see also *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3896.

REFERENCES: xliv. 22.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 41; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 555. xliv. 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1240.

Chap. xlv., ver. 2.—"I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight."

I. MAN must go. Each man is accomplishing a journey, going through a process. The only question is—How? Man may go, either with God or without Him. Whether we go with God or without Him, we shall find crooked places; we had better clearly understand this, lest any one should turn round after he has walked the first mile of Christian life, and say he expected there would have been no such places in all the course. Life is crooked; we ourselves are crooked; there is nothing in all human experience of which we can certainly say, This is perfectly straight. God Himself often inserts a crook in the lot. We should regard the text as a warning. There *are* crooked places.

II. The text is also a promise. "I will go before thee." God does not say where He will straighten our path; He does not say how; the great thing for us to believe is that there is a special promise for us, and to wait in devout hope for its fulfilment. He who waits for God is not misspending his time. Such waiting is true living—such tarrying is the truest speed.

III. The text is not only a warning and a promise, but also a plan. It is in the word *before* that I find the plan, and it is in that word *before* that I find the difficulty on the human side. God does not say, I will go alongside thee; we shall go step by step: He says, I will go before thee. Sometimes it may be a long way before us, so that we cannot see Him; and sometimes it may be just in front of us. But whether beyond, far away, or here close at hand, the great idea we have to live upon is that God goes before us. (1) Let us beware of regarding the text as a mere matter of course. There is an essential question of character to be settled. "The steps of a *good man* are ordered by the Lord." (2) Let us beware of regarding this text as a licence for carelessness. Let us not say, "If God goes before me, and makes all places straight, why need I care?" To the good man all life is holy; there is no step of

indifference; no subject that does not bring out his best desires. "The place whereon thou standest is holy ground" is the expression of every man who knows what it is to have God going before him. PARKER, *City Temple*, 1870, p. 4.

REFERENCES: xlv. 2.—*Pulpit Analyst*, vol. i., p. 166; *Preacher's Lantern*, vol ii., p. 381.

Chap. xlv., ver. 5.—"I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me."

GOD has a definite life-plan for every human person, girding him, visibly or invisibly, for some exact thing, which it will be the true significance and glory of his life to have accomplished. What a thought is this for every human soul to cherish! What dignity does it add to life! What instigations does it add to send us onward in everything that constitutes our excellence! We live in the Divine thought. We fill a place in the great everlasting plan of God's intelligence. We never sink below His care, never drop out of His counsel. But the inquiry will be made, supposing this to be true, how can we ever get hold of this life-plan God has made for us, or find our way into it?

I. Observe, first, some negatives that are important, and must be avoided. They are these: (1) You will never come into God's plan if you study singularity; for if God has a design and plan for every man's life, then it is exactly appropriate to his nature; and as every man's nature is singular and peculiar to himself—as peculiar as his face or look—then it follows that God will lead every man into a singular, original, and peculiar life, without any study or singularity on his part. (2) As little must we seek to copy the life of another. No man is ever called to be another. God has as many plans for men as He has men; and therefore He never requires them to measure their life exactly by any other life. (3) We are never to complain of our birth, our training, our employments, our hardships; never to fancy that we could be something, if only we had a different lot and sphere assigned us. God understands His own plan, and He knows what we want a great deal better than we do. (4) Another mistake to be carefully avoided is, that while we surrender and renounce all thought of making up a plan, or choosing out a plan, for ourselves, we do not also give up the hope or expectation that God will set us in any scheme of life, where the whole course of it will be known or set down beforehand. No contract will be made with Him, save that He engages, if you trust Him, to lead you into the best things all the way through.

II. More positive directions for coming into the plan God lays for us may be found (1) in God's character; (2) in our conscience; (3) in God's law and His written word.

H. BUSHNELL, *The New Life*, p. 7.

REFERENCES: xlv. 5.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 204. xlv. 7.—W. Page, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 6; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 183. xlv. 7-13.—C. Short, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 4.

Chap. xlv., ver. 15.—"Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour."

WE have to consider the truth that God's hiding of Himself is in order that He may be better known, and that His great end in all is that all the ends of the earth may look to Him and be saved.

I. This is true of the material universe. Matter in its dulness and insensibility hides God. Its crassness and opacity keeps the thought of God out of our minds. We lose God in the multitudinousness of the forms He presents to us. We are delighted with the picture, and never rise beyond. In the vastness of nature we often seem to lose ourselves rather than to find God. And yet this matter, so often felt as a concealing of God, is truly a revealing, a manifestation, of qualities in God which otherwise would have been hidden from us. How could God's almighty power have been made plain to us except through matter? Space and bulk and force illustrate power, and illustrate it the more clearly in proportion to the denseness, dulness, crassness of the material acted upon. The variety which may seem to hide God reveals the inexhaustibleness of His resources. Minuteness reveals the greatness of His care.

II. It is true of law, which is found everywhere in the material universe, that while it seems to hide God, it yet manifests Him in a higher way. The existence of law does not really hide God. On the contrary, it reveals Him in a grand and elevating way. What lessons it teaches of the Divine love for order, of the unity of God's mind, and His unchangeableness! What an impression it gives of the entire absence of caprice in His nature, and His absolute reliableness! How grandly it shows the subordination of all things, even the minutest, to one vast purpose! What a glory this universal supremacy of law casts over the moral law! And how gloriously it illustrates and harmonises with the Cross of Christ, which is the great vindication and triumph of law!

III. It is true of the means and agents employed by God that in them He hides Himself, yet reveals Himself in a higher way. God hides Himself behind truth and behind man. Yet what a revealing there is of God in this hiding of Himself, in thus keeping Himself out of sight, that truth may have free play, that souls may be trained and disciplined to the utmost, that men may be put to the highest possible use, and may be great and hallowed to each other!

IV. God hides Himself behind delay and disaster, and yet reveals Himself through these in a higher way.

J. Leckie, *Sermons Preached at Ibrox*, p. 94.

References: xlv. 15.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 75. xlv. 18-25.—C. Short, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 120. xlv. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 508; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 236.

Chap. xlv., ver. 21.—"A just God and a Saviour."

I. "A just God and a Saviour." The grand truth is manifestly this—that there is in God an everlasting harmony between the just and the merciful. He is just, not in opposition to salvation, but because He is a Saviour. He is a Saviour, not in opposition to justice, but because He is justice seeking to save. Let us ask, What is God's justice, and what His salvation? (1) God's justice is not merely the infliction of penalty; God's salvation is not merely deliverance from penalty. Justice in God is something far grander than the mere exercise of retribution; it is the love of eternal truth, purity, righteousness; and the penalties of untruth, impurity, unrighteousness, are the outflashings of that holy anger which is founded in His love of the right, the pure, and the true. God's salvation is a deliverance from penalty; it is a salvation from the miseries of sin, and the agonies inflicted on the soul by the remorse of conscience. But it is also the deliverance from evil,—salvation from the cruel lusts of wrong; from the bondage of unholy passions growing into the giant life of eternity; from the deep degradation and horrible selfishness of sin. (2) The law, the revelation of justice, came to lead men to God the Saviour. To save men from evil two things are requisite: (i) the sense of immortality; (ii) the sense of sin as a power in life. These the law awakens. (3) Christ, the revelation of God the Saviour, came to glorify God the Just.

II. We infer two lessons from this great truth. (1) The

necessity of Christian endeavour. (2) The ground of Christian trust. E. L. HULL, *Sermons*, 1st series, p. 131.

REFERENCES: **xlv. 22.**—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 234; *Ibid., Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 60; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 277; J. A. Spurgeon, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 351; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 3rd series, p. 40; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 116; M. G. Pearse, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., No. 372. xlvi. 4.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 237; *Ibid., Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 81.

Chap. xlvi., ver. 5.—"To whom will ye liken Me, and make Me equal, and compare Me, that we may be like?"

IN these words, as in other and similar passages of Scripture, God asserts an immeasurable difference between Himself and all created beings.

I. We distinguish the Creator from every creature by declaring Him self-existent. There is no way of accounting for the origin of everything except by supposing something which never had origin. Nothing could have begun to be unless there had been something which never began to be. Here is the grand distinction between the Creator and the creature: the being of the one is underived, and that of the other derived. The existence of all creatures is a dependent existence; it has been imparted by another, and may be withdrawn by that other. The existence of the Creator is a necessary existence, altogether independent, indebted to none for commencement, and resting on none for continuance. It is by His name Jehovah—that name which breathes self-existence—that God proclaims Himself inscrutable and unimaginable.

II. We learn from this the vanity of all attempts to explain or illustrate the Trinity in Unity. If we were able to produce exact instances of the union of three in one, we should have no right to point it out as at all parallel with the union of the Godhead. We ought to know beforehand that the created can furnish no delineation of the uncreated; so that it shows a forgetfulness of the self-existence of God to seek His resemblance in what he hath called into being. He best shows the workings of a sound judgment and ripened intellect who, in such a matter as the doctrine of the Trinity, submits to the disclosures of revelation, and receives it on the authority of God, though unable to explain it through any reasoning of his own. The doctrine of the Trinity is *above* reason, but it is not *against* reason.

III. Consider the paramount importance of the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity is so bound up with the whole of Christianity, that to think of removing it and yet of preserving the religion is to think of taking from the body all its sinew and its bone, and yet leaving it all its symmetry and its strength. The whole falls to pieces if you destroy this doctrine. The short but irresistible way of proving that the doctrine of the Trinity is in the largest sense a practical doctrine is to remind you that if this doctrine be false, Jesus Christ is nothing more than a man and the Holy Spirit nothing more than a principle or quality. To remove the doctrine of the Trinity is to remove whatever is peculiar to Christianity, to reduce the religion to a system of loftier morals and stronger sanctions than the world before possessed; but nevertheless having nothing to deserve the name of Gospel, because containing no tidings of an expiation for sin. *Without* a Trinity I must save myself; *with* a Trinity I am to be saved through Christ.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1731.

REFERENCE: xlvi. 5.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 299.

Chap. xlvi., vers. 12, 13.—"Hearken unto Me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness: I bring near My righteousness; it shall not be far off, and My salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel My glory."

I. GOD'S dealings with mankind have all been of a character which may be called unexpected. We do not know in the whole of Scripture a more beautiful transition than that of the text, one less to have been anticipated where there was no acquaintance with redemption. The very circumstance that men are addressed as stouthearted, and far from righteousness, prepares you for an announcement at which the boldest should tremble; it is as the prelude to the storm, and you can look for nothing but a burst of thunder which shall make the mountains rock. But that instead of the thunder should succeed the sweet and gentle music of love; that those who are called stouthearted should be summoned to listen, not to a threatening of destruction, but to a promise of deliverance; that they should be told of the approach, not of a ministry of anger, but of a ministry of mercy,—in this it is that we find cause for wonder, this it is we could not have expected, could not have explained, if we did not know of arrangements through which God can be just, and yet the justifier of sinners.

II. We may be sure that, having summoned the stouthearted to hearken, the words which immediately follow are such as God knows to be specially adapted to the case of the stouthearted; that is, to contain the motives which are most likely to bring them to contrition and repentance. The nearness of salvation is made an argument with the ungodly why they should turn from evil courses—just as preached the Baptist, "Repent ye; *for* the kingdom of heaven is at hand." There is a motive to repentance in the approach of a Deliverer. There is a motive in our standing within the possibility of forgiveness. Hitherto we could only despair; now we may hope.

III. It is salvation which God declares He will place in Zion, and we must connect this salvation with the righteousness which He is said to bring near. You have here the most faithful description of the deliverance provided through the mediation of Christ. Sum it up in one word, and that deliverance is righteousness. God placed salvation in Zion when in Zion stood the Mediator who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2147.

Chap. xlvi., ver. 13 (with chap. li., ver. 5).—"I bring near My righteousness; it shall not be far off, and My salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel My glory."

I. WHAT are these two things—Jehovah's righteousness and Israel's salvation? How are they related to one another and connected with one another? And what in particular is the meaning of the precedence or priority assigned to the one as coming before the other—My righteousness, My salvation? (1) It is very evident that the Lord's righteousness must mean, not a Divine attribute, but a Divine work, or effect or manifestation of some kind. (2) A judicial dealing with His enemies, on the part of God, precedes and prepares the way for the deliverance or salvation of His people; and when He brings near the one, the other will not tarry. (3) God must first consult for His own righteous name before He can consult for His people's complete safety; He must first right Himself before He can consistently and conclusively deliver them. Only in the train of the righteousness of God can His salvation go forth.

II. It may be said that the Lord brings His righteousness near, or that it is near, in three senses. (1) It is near, the Lord brings it near, in the Gospel offer as a free gift, wholly of grace, not of works at all. (2) The Lord bringeth near this

righteousness in the powerful striving and working of His Spirit. (3) The Lord brings near His righteousness in the believing appropriation of it which His Spirit enables you to make.

R. S. CANDLISH, *The Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 246.

Chap. xlvii., vers. 11-15.—"Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee," etc.

I. LOOK at this picture of utter and most painful bewilderment. It is the necessary and inevitable result of sin.

II. Hear the Divine challenge addressed to the false powers in which we have trusted.

III. See the doom of false securities. (1) We cannot escape the trial of our securities. (2) If we set ourselves against God, we challenge all the forces of His creation.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 114; see also *Pulpit Notes*, p. 214.

REFERENCES: xlvii. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol viii., No. 444. xlviii. 8.—*Ibid.*, vol. xiii., No. 779; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 353. xlviii. 9-11.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1041. xlviii. 10.—*Ibid.*, vol. i., No. 35, vol. xxiv., No. 1430; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 63; *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. i., p. 501. xlviii. 16.—G. Calthrop, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 33; J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 199.

Chap. xlviii., ver. 17.—"I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit."

IT is not only the commercial world which has to make its calculations of profit and loss. All life is made up of profit and loss. And if there is not profit, there is loss; and if there is not loss, there is profit.

I. I understand the text to mean, not that God teaches us in a profitable way, but that He instructs us how to get the profit in all things; that He gives that faculty—the power to take the good and refuse the evil; to imbibe the honey and reject the poison.

II. Consider how God does "teach to profit." (1) The first thing which God will probably teach and which we must receive is a general confidence that there is a profit, however imperceptible it may be at the time to us, in the thing which He is sending to us. (2) This faith given, the next thing that God puts into our hearts is to seek that good; eternal profit,

profit both to ourselves and to Him, in that He is glorified in His own work. We are to look for that profit, not on the surface, but in certain deeper, hidden meanings and intentions which lie underneath. Into those deeper meanings God will lead and admit you. But not without three things: a reverent acceptance of His teaching, hard work, and a good life. These are God's three conditions in all His teaching, from which He never departs. You must love the teaching; you must work the teaching out with great pains and at any cost; and you must do His will.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 13th series, p. 21.

REFERENCES: xlviii. 17.—W. J. Mayers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 228. xlviii. 17, 18.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 47. xlviii. 18.—A. Raleigh, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 369 (see also *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 208); Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 610; W. Steadman, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 152; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 553; J. Keble, *Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 414; J. N. Norton, *Every Sunday*, p. 401.

Chap. xlix., ver. 4.—"Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God."

THERE are two principal causes of the discouragement of the Christian. The first is the greatness of the task which God sets before him; the second is his inability to accomplish it.

I. We are so constituted that every time the ideal of love and holiness to which the Gospel calls us is presented to us in its sublime beauty, our heart vibrates with a profound assent, and we feel that it is for this end that we were created. But when we must not only admire but act, when we must no longer let the imagination kindle at a perfection which ravishes it, but must realise this perfection in life, then we measure with dismay the distance which separates us from it,—discouragement seizes us. See what takes place in human affairs. Let a commonplace mind propose some end, commonplace like himself; it will cost him but little trouble to attain to it; artist, thinker, or poet, he will be easily satisfied. But let a true genius conceive a sublime ideal, let him seek to reproduce it, you will hear him mourn over his failures! Each of his efforts will perhaps produce a masterpiece which will satisfy everybody but himself. If God demanded less of us than holiness, He would be inferior to us, and our conscience would exact that which He Himself no longer exacted.

II. The second cause of the Christian'a discouragement is the ill-success of his efforts. It enters into God's plan to conceal from us almost always the results of what we do for Him. Why does God will it? (1) That faith may be exercised. Picture a Christian life, where each effort will bear its fruits, where response will follow prayer, harvest seed-time, and the joy of deliverance long and painful sacrifices. In such a case, who would not be a Christian? Self-interest would be the first motive with all, and the kingdom of God would be peopled with mercenaries. (2) God treats us thus to humble us. (3) In this school He teaches us gentleness and compassion. Success alone will never develop these.

III. The fruit of our labours is only hidden; it will appear in due time. And even when nothing of it shall remain upon the earth, and the indifference of the world shall seem to conceal for ever your labours and your sacrifices, there will be left to you the consolation of the prophet: "My judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." This it is which ever constitutes the strength of the Christian. Solitary, deserted, despised by men, he has for Witness, for Approver, for Judge, the invisible Master whom nothing escapes, by whom nothing is forgotten.

E. BERSIER, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 305.

I. THIS is just the language which we find at times forcing its way from the lips of most of those great men who have felt most conscious of having a mission from God. Those who have most deeply and radically influenced for good the minds of their generation have been usually distinguished by fits of profound melancholy; regret that they have ever entered on their heroic course; weariness at the opposition which they meet with; distrust of their own fitness for the task; doubts whether God has really commissioned them to act on His behalf. Why is this? It is because God's results are for the most part secret. A man who sets a great example is hardly ever conscious of the effect which his example produces. If his plans are not carried out precisely in the way and to the end which he had originally contemplated, he persuades himself that they have been an utter failure, that no good can have arisen from them; whereas the truth is, and other persons see it, that the particular plans were from the outset worthless, in comparison with the exhibition of character by which the very attempt to execute them was accompanied.

II. The cross of Christ is the true guide to the nature and the value of real success. What a failure was the life of Christ, if we measure it by immediate results! No wonder that the cross was to the Jews a sore stumbling-block, and to the cultivated Greeks utter foolishness, just as it would now appear to most of us. For even we, the heirs of eighteen centuries of faith in the Crucified One, seem hardly yet to have learned the lesson that the suffering, self-sacrifice, devotion to principles, and heedlessness of immediate consequences, are the indispensable foundations of all permanent success.

H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow Sermons*, p. 308.

I. SOME persons give themselves much unnecessary pain by underrating their real service in the world. The question of good-doing is one of great subtlety. The quiet worker is apt to envy the man who lives before society in a great breadth of self-demonstration. It is as if the dew should wish to be the pattering hail, or as if the soft breeze should disquiet itself because it cannot roar like a storm. We forget that whirlwind and earthquake, fire and cloud, tempest and silence, have all been God's messengers; and it would be foolish of any of them to suppose that it had been of no use in the world.

II. The text shows the true comfort of those who mourn the littleness and emptiness of their lives. "My judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." God knows our purposes, our opportunities, and our endeavours, and He will perfect that which concerneth us. The intention of the heart, which it was impracticable to realise, will be set down to our favour, as if we had accomplished it all; and some of us who think that our inheritance can be but very bare and fruitless, will find that instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle-tree, and our little portion in Israel shall become a great possession.

PARKER, *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. i., p. 661.

REFERENCES: xlix. 4.—J. Ker, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 352; J. Keble, *Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 401. xlix. 6.—K. Veitch, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 293. xlix. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 103; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 3. xlix. 11.—A. Maclaren, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 125. xlix. 13-20.—C. Short, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 163. xlix. 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 512; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 312. xlix. 20, 21.—*Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 240.

Chap. I., vers. 2-4.

THESE words could have been spoken only by the Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. They place before our thoughts:—

I. His Divine power and glory. Power is naturally calm. The power that sustains the universe is, in fact, most wonderful when, unseen, unfelt, with its Divine silence and infinite ease, it moves on in its ordinary course; but we are often most impressed by it when it strikes against obstructions, and startles the senses by its violence. Knowing our frame, and dealing with us as with children, our Teacher seeks to impress us with a sense of His Divine power, by bidding us think of Him as working by inexorable force certain awful changes and displacements in nature. "I dry up the sea; I made the rivers a wilderness," etc.

II. His human life and education. "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned," etc. Gradually, it seems, the Divine Spirit, like a mysterious voice, woke up within Him the consciousness of what He was, and of what He had come on earth to fulfil. Morning by morning, through all the days of His childhood, the voice was ever awakening Him to higher consciousness and more awful knowledge.

III. The mediatorial teaching for which He had been thus prepared. (1) It is personal. If His own personal teaching had not been in view, there would have been no need for all this personal preparation. "The Lord hath given *Me* the tongue of the learned, that *I* should know how to speak." This is His own testimony to the great fact that He Himself personally teaches every soul that is saved. (2) It is suitable. Suitable to our weariness: (*a*) while we are yet in a state of unregeneracy; (*b*) when we are sinking under the burden of guilt; (*c*) when fainting under the burden of care; (*d*) when burdened under the intellectual mysteries of theology; (*e*) when under the burden of mortal infirmity. (3) The teaching of Christ is minutely direct and particular. When I read that He is ordained to speak "*to him* that is weary," I understand that He does not speak in a general, impersonal, unrecognising way to the forlorn crowd of sufferers, but to every man in particular, and to every man apart.

C. STANFORD, *Symbols of Christ*, p. 147.

REFERENCE: I. 2-6.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 243.

Chap. l., ver. 4.—"A word in season to him that is weary."

WEARINESS comes to man through various channels and from many sources. We have many doors in our nature, and at every one of these weariness may enter.

I. There is—to begin at the lowest door of all—the physical one, the weariness which comes to us from bodily toil, or from toil which, whether bodily or not, tells upon the body by wasting for the time its energies. What is the word in season for such cases as these? Surely the word in season to many is, Release your strain, moderate your speed, economise your health. What shall it profit you if you gain the whole world and lose your life?

II. Some men are weary with pleasure; I would say a word in season to them. There is no decree of God more stern or more inflexible than that which has determined that misery shall be the constant companion of the man that seeks pleasure. There is no creature either in heaven or earth who shall ever find the real fruit of happiness growing upon any tree but that of loyal obedience to the authority of God.

III. Some men are weary with well-doing which seems to come to so poor an end. The word in season for such men is this:—Think that God still holds on to His Divine purpose, and that were He to grow weary in well-doing, He would plunge the world into desolation in a moment. And be sure of this, that nothing good is ever lost.

IV. There are those who are weary of the strife with sin—what is the word in season to them? This, that Christ has already vanquished your most powerful foe, and will make you more than conqueror.

V. There is one word more in season for those who are weary in sin, but not yet weary of it. "Come now, and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

E. MELLOR, *In the Footsteps of Heroes*, p. 92.

REFERENCES: l. 4.—E. Johnson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 264; W. Baxendale, *Ibid.*, vol. xxix., p. 347; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., 79. l. 5, 6.—T. B. Dover, *A Lent Manual*, p. 124 l. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1486; J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 325.

Chap. l., ver. 7.—"Therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed."

THE happiest of gifts for a man to be born with into the world

is strength of will; not that a man can by it avoid suffering and sin, but for this—that suffering especially raises and heightens the strong will; that when it forsakes sin it forsakes it without a sigh. Happiness within, attractiveness towards others, ease of repentance and amendment, firmness against opposition, are the splendid dower which the strong will brings to the soul. It is our wisdom then to ask, How shall we keep or make our wills strong?

I. We cannot do this merely by persisting in having our own way as we call it. Our own way may be wrong; and no one ever uses the word strength in connection with crime or fault—never calls a sinful, a wilful, a violent man a strong man. The reason is evident, namely, that wilful sinning is only using a will in the direction in which it is easiest to use it. And this cannot make the will stronger, any more than a mind would grow strong which employed itself only on intellectual work which presented no difficulty to it. The will must make progress by avoiding things to which it is prone, and by aiming at things which it simply knows in any way to be good, although for the time being it may be that they are not fully desired.

II. There are times when there rises before us a noble ideal of what we ought to be, and we feel an impulse to believe we might be. What is that ideal? It is the "will of God concerning us," as St. Paul says. It is what we may each become by the power of the Spirit of God. Into this ideal we cannot at once pass. But we can be ever approaching it. It is not in human nature to make that sudden change, but it is perfectly possible to make a beginning. And for this purpose we must call in the aid of that very will itself to act upon our will; for there is no power in us higher, more primary, than the will. If the will is to be affected, the will itself must do the work. Suppose one resolve be made; then here at once our will begins to be of constant use to us, and to grow stronger in itself. Our will is not really acting at all when it is working out, however strongly, a natural inclination. The will is only strengthened when it is set to active work, something which we have clearly seen to be our duty, although when we come to do it we find the pursuit of it tax our strength exceedingly.

ARCHBISHOP BENSON, *Boy Life: Sundays in Wellington College*, p. 39.

REFERENCES: l. 7.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 246; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 151, vol. xvi, p. 143.

Chap. l., ver. 10.—"Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God."

I. Consider the character of those who are visited with the experience described in the text. Two features stand prominently forth—the pious mind, the godly, Christlike life. (1) The pious mind. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord?" The fear of the Lord was the sign of the godly character and the strength of the godly life. It describes, under the conditions of the older dispensation, the spirit and the attitude of the man to whom the mind and the will of God were not only substantial, but supreme realities in the conduct of his life—the man who set the Lord always before him, and who knew, in his secret soul, that the one great concern of life was to stand right with Him. (2) He will manifest his fear by a godly, Christlike life. "That obeyeth the voice of His servant." He who has an eye for God will also have an eye for Christ. He who feareth the Father obeyeth also the Son, and recognises Him at once as the "Sent of God."

II. The condition of experience described in the text. "Who walketh in darkness and hath no light." (1) The plainest source of this darkness is the seeming frustration of our holiest and most unselfish purposes, a dreary want of success in what seems to us our best and most Christlike work. (2) We may be passing through very heavy pressures of affliction, and missing the comfort, the hope, which we think God should bring to us. We cry that we are forsaken. (3) But the main source of the darkness which sometimes buries the most pious and faithful under its pall is the shadow of their own sinful nature, which at moments it seems to them hopeless even for God to attempt to redeem.

III. The text tells us of the believer's trust and stay. Stay yourselves on God. That is, hold to your duty, the duty next to your hand, in the strength of God. Keep firm in the broad highway, and await the inevitable dawn. Night is not the inevitable thing: "There shall be no night there." The dawn is inevitable; for God lives, and God is light.

J. Baldwin Brown, *The Higher Life*, p. 205.

I. We must admit that there is wrong somewhere when the mind and soul are not in a state of peace and happiness. Pain is the alarm-bell which tells us something is wrong. If all

were perfectly right within us and about us, satisfaction and thankfulness would fill the spirit. But if we are dissatisfied and apprehensive and distressed, then there is something wrong; such a state has a sufficient cause. But suppose people who are restless and suffering mistake the cause of their trouble, suppose they think it comes from something from which it does not come, all their efforts to cure it will be useless. He who takes God's will, as it becomes known to him, and makes it his own, is one with God, is reconciled to God. However dark or uncertain or apprehensive or distressed may be his spirit, that does not in the least interfere with his reconciliation with God, any more than the anguish of neuralgia shakes a man's credit with his banker. But it is quite certain that many of these reconciled souls attribute their perplexities to a wrong cause; they think their sufferings prove that their hearts are not right in the sight of God. Whereas it often happens that their bodies are not right, or their heads are not right.

II. Here comes in the secret of this good text: "Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God." The triumph of Christianity over doubts engendered by disease can only come from a simple, manly confidence in the unchangeable goodness of God. To win this may be the life-discipline for some, and noble is the attainment when such in despondency can say, "Though He slay me, yet will I put my trust in Him."

W. PAGE-ROBERTS, *Liberalism in Religion*, p. 157

I. To some persons it may seem strange advice to tell them, that in the hour of darkness, doubt, or sorrow they will find no comfort like that of meditating on the name of the ever-blessed Trinity. Yet there is not a prophet or psalmist of the Old Testament who does not speak of the "name of the Lord" as a kind of talisman against all the troubles which can befall the spirit of man. It was for this simple reason, that it is by that name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that God has revealed Himself. That is the name by which He bids us think of Him; and we are, more or less, disregarding His commands when we think of Him by any other.

II. Man may give God what name he chooses. Absolute, Infinite, First Cause, and so forth, are deep words; but they are words of man's invention, and words which plain, hard-working, hard-sorrowing folks do not understand; and therefore

I do not trust them, cannot find comfort for my soul n them. But Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are words which plain, hard-working, hard-sorrowing men can understand; and can trust, and can find comfort in them; for they are God's own words, and, like all God's words, go straight home to the hearts of men.

III. Some will tell you, that if you are sorrowful it is a time for self-examination, and for thinking of your own soul. I answer—In good time, but not yet. Think first of God. For how can you ever know anything rightly about your own soul, unless you first know rightly concerning God, in whom your soul lives and moves and has its being? Others may tell you to think of God's dealings with His people. I answer—In good time, but not yet. Think first of God. For how can you rightly understand God's dealings, unless you first rightly understand who God is, and what His character is? Truly to know God is everlasting life; and the more we think of God by His own revealed name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the more we shall enter, now and hereafter, into eternal life, and into the peace which comes by the true knowledge of Him.

C. KINGSLEY, *Discipline and Other Sermons*, p. 75.

REFERENCES: l. 10.—W. M. Taylor, *Limitations of Life*, p. 312 (see also *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 210); *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 139, vol. v., p. 32; A. Watson, *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 113; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 263.

Chap. l., ver. 11.—"Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of Mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow."

IN this text the many fictitious sources from which men seek to derive happiness are compared to a fire kindled, and sparks struck out by way of relieving the darkness of the night. It is of course implied in the metaphor, that true happiness, the real and adequate complement of man's nature, resembles the divinely created and golden sunlight.

I. This comparison does not lead us to deny that pleasure and gratification of a certain kind are derivable from worldly sources. Just as man can relieve himself in great measure from the discomfort and inconvenience of natural darkness, by kindling a fire and surrounding himself with sparks, so can he alleviate, to a certain extent, the instinctive sense of

disquietude and dissatisfaction, so irksome to him at intervals of leisure, by the various enjoyments which life has to offer. These are lights which gleam brightly for a moment, but will fade and die down beneath the sobering dawn of eternity.

II. Consider the drawbacks of worldly enjoyments. (1) Unsatisfactoriness adheres in their very nature, inasmuch as they are all (more or less) artificial. They are miserable substitutes, which man has set up to stand him in stead of that true happiness, which is congenial to his nature, and adapted to his wants. (2) The fitful character of the enjoyment derived from worldly sources renders it comparable to a fire and sparks struck out. (3) A fire requires constantly to be fed with fresh fuel, if its brilliancy and warmth are to be maintained. Hence it becomes an apt emblem of the delusive joy of the world, falsely called happiness, which is only kept alive in the worldling's heart by the fuel of excitement. (4) But perhaps the chief drawback of the worldling's so-called happiness is that it is consistent with so much anxiety—that it is subject to frequent intrusions from alarm, whenever a glimpse of the future untowardly breaks in upon his mind. It is in the night-time, when the kindled fire glows upon the hearth, and man pursues his employments by the light of torch and taper, that apprehensions visit his mind, and phantom forms are conjured up which scare the ignorant and the superstitious. It is the dim foreboding of evil that cankers effectually the worldling's joy.

E. M. GOULBURN, *Sermons in the Parish Church of Holywell*, p. 429.

REFERENCES: li. i.—C. P. Reichel, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 213 (see also *Anglican Pulpit of To-day*, p. 366); Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1050; E. de Pressensé. *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 321. li. 1, 2.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 139. li. 2, 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1596. li. 3.—*Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 153. li. 5.—*Ibid*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 244.

Chap. li., ver. 6.—"Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but My salvation shall be for ever, and My righteousness shall not be abolished."

I. CONSIDER, first, the heavens above and the earth beneath, as temporal either in themselves or in regard to us who must "die in like manner." (1) Our text is the record of a great appoint-

ment extending to the whole surrounding universe, and sentencing it to dissolution and extinction. Without supposing the actual annihilation of matter, we may speak of the universe as destined to be destroyed, seeing that the systems which are to succeed to the present will be wholly different, and wear all the traces of a new creation. We have been accustomed to distinguish between what we count fleeting and what we regard as enduring, between the rock and the mountain, the flower and the moth. Is it not a confounding thought, that by a simple effort of His will the Almighty is to unhinge and dislocate the amazing mechanism of the universe, sweep away myriads upon myriads of stupendous worlds, and yet remain Himself the great "I Am," the same when stars and planets fall as when in far back time they blazed at His command? (2) Our text marks out a second way in which our connection with visible things—the heavens and the earth—may be brought to a close. "They that dwell therein shall die in like manner." There comes a day when our connection with earth must be terminated by death, when the sun must rise on us for the last time, though millions of cheerful eyes will hail his rising on the morrow. The simple consideration that we must soon die, and that death must for ever withdraw us from the objects of sense, ought in itself to suffice to persuade us of the madness of living for the present instead of to the future.

II. A contrast is drawn between God, His salvation, and His righteousness, and the heavens and the earth. It seems the design of the passage to affix a general character to the objects of faith as distinguished from the objects of sense—the character of permanence as distinguished from that of decline. We need not analyse with a close scrutiny the exact import of the words "salvation and righteousness." They plainly include all those rich mercies and those gifts of grace here and of glory hereafter, which are promised to such as believe on Jesus and commit to Him the keeping of their souls. And thus they affix the character of "everlasting" to that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Look on the heavens that are now, they "shall vanish away like smoke;" look on the earth beneath, "it shall wax old as a garment." But we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. These shall be for ever; these shall not be abolished. H MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2169.

REFERENCES: li. 6.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 124; *Literary Churchman Sermons*, p. 242.

Chap. li., ver. 9.—"Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the ancient days, in the generations of old."

Chap. lii., ver. 1.—"Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion."

NOTICE: I. The occurrence in the Church's history of successive periods of energy and of languor. The uninterrupted growth would be best; but if that has not been, then the ending of winter by spring, and the supplying of the dry branches, and the resumption of the arrested growth is the next best and the only alternative to rotting away. We ought to desire such a merciful interruption of the sad continuity of our languor and decay. The surest sign of its coming would be a widespread desire and expectation of its coming, joined with a penitent consciousness of our heavy and sinful slumber. And another sign of its approach is the extremity of the need. "If winter come, can spring be far behind?"

II. The twofold explanation of these variations. (1) It is true that God's arm slumbers, and is not clothed with power. There are, as a fact, apparent variations in the energy with which He works in the Church and in the world. And they are real variations, not merely apparent. The might with which God works in the world through His Church varies according to the Church's receptiveness and faithfulness. (2) If God's arm seems to slumber, and really does so, it is because Zion sleeps. The law has ever been, "According to your faith be it unto you." God gives as much as we will, as much as we can hold, as much as we use, and far more than we deserve.

III. The beginning of all awaking is the Church's earnest cry to God. Look at the passionate earnestness of Israel's cry, thrice repeated, as from one in mortal need, and see to it that our drowsy prayers be like it. Look at the grand confidence with which it founds itself on the past, recounting the mighty deeds of ancient days; and looking back, not for despair, but for joyful confidence on the generations of old; and let our faint-hearted faith be quickened by the example to expect great things of God.

IV. The answering call from God to Zion. Our truest prayers are but the echo of God's promises. God's best answers are the echoes of our prayers. (1) The chief means of quickened life and strength is deepened communion with Christ. (2) This summons calls us to the faithful use of the power which, on condition of that communion, we have.

A. MACLAREN, *The Secret of Power*, p. 58.

REFERENCES: li. 9.—A. Rowland, *Christian World Pulpit*,

vol. xxviii., p. 264. li. 9, 10.—G. H. Wilkinson, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1038 (see also *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 214). li. 11.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvi., p. 15; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 25.

Chap. lii., ver. 1.—"Awake, awake, . . . O Zion."

I. Consider God's command to His people, "Awake, awake." (1) Certain objects of vision are important to the Church of God, and that these may be kept in view, God saith, "Awake, awake." The objects which I would name are ever-existent and ever-present spiritual objects—God, our one Father; the Son of God, our only Saviour; and the Comforter, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son. (2) Certain sources of supply and fountains of pleasure and means of help are important to the Church of God, and that these may be possessed and enjoyed and used, God saith, "Awake, awake." (3) There is good and godly work to be done by Zion; therefore God saith, "Awake, awake." There are two objects in the sphere of our present thought, towards which the Church of God requires to be faithful, and therefore wakeful. (*a*) Her own endowments, and (*b*) her opportunities. (4) There are battles which Zion is called to fight, and victories to be won which Zion alone can win; therefore God bids Zion awake.

II. Having interpreted the voice, let us note some of its features and characteristics. (1) The voice that would awaken us is divine. (2) The voice that would awaken us is powerful and full of majesty—a voice, therefore, that stirs and that strengthens, while it stirs him who listens to it. (3) The voice that would awaken us has in it a tone of reproach. The cry, "Awake, awake," corrects and rebukes, while it stimulates and exhorts. (4) This voice is a gracious voice. It is the voice of Him who has called His people to be His people, and who will not cast off His people; it is a voice that woos and wins, while it stimulates and arouses. (5) The voice that cries "Awake, awake," is the voice of Zion's God. He who calls Zion His own, and possesses her as a bridegroom his bride, calls, "Awake, awake."

S. Martin, *Rain upon the Mown Grass*, p. 85.

Chap. lii., ver. 1.—"Put on thy strength, O Zion."

I. The word "strength" represents those properties and qualities which are developed in endurance and in action, also a very high degree of active force and enduring power. The strength

of any community is primarily in the individuals who constitute it; so that the strength of the Church of God is not entirely, but first of all, in the separate members of that body. (1) The strength of Zion is the strength of human nature. (2) The strength of Zion is also the power of every religious principle. (3) There is strength in all life, and Zion lives with the rich and full and eternal life of God within her. (4) The strength of Zion is the power of certain agencies and influences. The Church has power in her testimony to truth, in her intercession before God, and in her character as the leaven of society and the salt of the nations.

II. God saith, "Put on thy strength, O Zion." If a man puts *out* his strength, he puts *on* strength; he appears clothed with strength, as with a garment. The text assumes that Zion's strength is not put out. The terms in which she is addressed prove this. "Awake, awake, O Zion." In sleep all the members of the body put on weakness. Now God is not satisfied with this, and He cries, "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion."

III. Notice some reasons why God should thus speak to His Church. (1) God bids Zion put on her strength for self-manifestation. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Strong winds make themselves heard. Strong sunshine makes itself felt. Strong life shows itself, whether in the animal or vegetable kingdom. And the Church, to be heard and seen and felt and known, must be strong. (2) God bids Zion put on her strength that He may be glorified. A redeemed man is a new creation and a Divine workmanship. On the principle involved in the words, "This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise," Zion is required to put on her strength. (3) God requires Zion to put out her strength for the sake of her own well-being. If the powers of the Church be inactive, they will decline. Unmanifested religious life, whether in the person or the community, soon subsides. (4) Zion is required to put on her strength in order to meet the claims of a sinful and suffering world. Zion's mission demands Zion's strength. (5) God directs Zion to put on her strength, because strength has been given her to put on. Whatever God makes us be, He would have us appear to be. Whatever God endows us with, He would have us use and employ. (6) Is not this putting on of strength as essential to Zion's peace and joy as to her outward prosperity? The

Church of the living God can only have rest and be joyful as she does put on strength. Sleep is not always sweet. There is a kind of sleep that is most uneasy, and the misery of idleness and inactivity is proverbial.

S. MARTIN, *Rain upon the Mown Grass*, p. 98.

Chap. lii., ver. 1.—"Put on thy strength."

MEN can rouse themselves to action. There is more power in man than he may be aware of, and he should inquire what objects and pursuits are worthy of his enthusiastic devotion.

I. No object which bears upon this world only is worthy of the supreme energy of man.

II. Spiritual objects are alone worthy of the supreme energy of man. (1) They are akin to his own nature. (2) They touch every point of his being. (3) They prepare him for the solemnity and service of the future.

III. The fact that spiritual objects alone are worthy of the supreme energy of man should impel to decisive action. (1) "Put on thy strength"—for the time is short. (2) "Put on thy strength"—for the enemy is on the alert. (3) "Put on thy strength"—for the Master is worthy.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. ii., p. 67 (see also *Pulpit Notes*, p. 81).

REFERENCES: lii. 1.—J. C. Harrison, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 526; A. F. Barfield, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 319; W. Burrows, *Ibid.*, vol. xi., p. 172; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 33, vol. x., p. 181.

Chap. lii., ver. 7.—"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation," etc.

I. IN their first sense these words form a part of that great series of encouragement and consolation in which the prophet promises to Israel redemption from captivity and return from exile, and assures the chosen people of God that, though for a time deserted and forsaken, they shall yet be restored to the land given to their fathers, and the worship of God once more established on the heights of Mount Zion. But the prophet, while thus describing in thrilling language the deliverance of his countrymen from bondage, rises to the contemplation of promises which far transcend the greatness of the most glorious earthly kingdom, and passes from the thought of Israel after the flesh to the eternal spiritual Israel, "whose

people shall be all righteous, and inherit the land for ever"—the Church of God.

II. The Apostle Paul appropriates and intensifies the aspirations of the prophet; he shows how the deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Assyria typified and prefigured the deliverance of all men—whether belonging to the earthly Israel or not, whether born in the east or the west, in the north or the south—from the yet more bitter slavery of sin; and that if a blessing from God followed the feet of the herald who proclaimed the temporal restoration of Zion and the glad tidings of political peace and liberty, far deeper and truer would be the blessing which would attend the footsteps of those who preached the good tidings of spiritual liberty and the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

G. E. COTTON, *Sermons to English Congregations in India*, p. 21.

REFERENCE: lii. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 185.

I. THE news of the Gospel is news of a victory over sin—news of a victory over death—news of a reconciliation with our God and Father, against whom we had been lured by our enemy, Sin, to be guilty of treachery and rebellion. Jesus has not put an end to the war as yet; but He has put it on quite a new footing. Sin is still abiding in the world, notwithstanding the victories of Jesus, just as a remnant of the Canaanites was left on the borders of the promised land, notwithstanding the victories of Joshua. Those Canaanites, the Bible tells us, were left to try the children of Israel, and to teach them war (Judges iii. 1, 2); and it is perhaps for a like reason that sin is still left on earth, in order that we may be put to the test to prove whether we choose to obey God or no, and that we may be trained to our duties as Christ's soldiers by a course of hard service against God's enemies.

II. Before Christ's coming, for the great bulk of mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, the battle against sin was quite hopeless. Sin was waxing every day stronger and spreading wider; goodness, on the other hand, was growing rarer and rarer. Man felt himself to be overmatched by sin; indeed, he could scarcely lift up his hand against it. But all this is now changed, and most blessedly, for the better. We are no longer the weaker side. Christ has provided armour of proof for us, has sent His Spirit to strengthen us while we are standing, and has given us His cross to catch hold of when we are falling. He has proclaimed

that we are at peace with God, that we may fight with a better heart. He has promised and assured us of a glorious triumph for every one who will fight his best. Such is the news which Jesus has brought us. Whereas before men could not cope with sin, we may now be sure of overcoming it. Whereas men before shuddered at the thought of death as the dark and dismal end of all things, we have now been taught to look upon it as the gate of a more glorious life. Whereas men before felt that they were at enmity with God, and therefore could not love Him or take pleasure in Him, they now know that He is ready to receive them into favour, and will treat them as sons, if they will only behave to Him as such.

A. W. HARE, *The Alton Sermons*, p. 135.

Chap. lii., ver. 12.—"For ye shall not go out with haste, nor go by flight: for the Lord will go before you; and the God of Israel will be your rereward."

I. CONSIDER the essentially symbolic character of the captivities and deliverances of the Jewish people. The history of Israel is the Divine key to the history of man. In that history there were two great captivities and two great deliverances. The people were born in the one captivity—it was the dark accident of nature; the other they earned by sin. These represent our natural bondage, and the self-earned serfdom of the soul. There is one Deliverer and one deliverance from both. The method of His deliverance was the same out of both captivities—a glorious manifestation of the might of the redeeming arm of God.

II. We have the image here of the great deliverance which is freely offered in the Gospel. It furnishes (1) the key to our protracted discipline. God will not have us "go out with haste, nor go forth by flight." These long wanderings, this patient waiting, is a store of power and wisdom, whose worth you will never estimate till your footsteps press the borders of your Canaan. (2) "The Lord will go before you." He has gone before us (*a*) in bearing to the uttermost the penalty of sin; (*b*) in breaking the power of evil; (*c*) in the way of the wilderness, through life's protracted discipline, to glory.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 419.

REFERENCES: lii. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 230, vol. xxx., No. 1793; S. A. Tipple, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 215. lii. 13-15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1231; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xxii., p. 211. lii. 14.—T. B. Dover, *A Lent Manual*, p. 142. liii. 1.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 55; R. Milman, *The Love of the Atonement*, pp. 8, 17. liii. 1-12.—C. Clemance, *To the Light through the Cross*, p. 3.

Chap. liii., ver. 2.—"He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him."

"RELIGION is a weariness." Such is the judgment commonly passed, often avowed, concerning the greatest of blessings which Almighty God has bestowed upon us. And when God gave the blessing, He at the same time foretold that such would be the judgment of the world upon it, even as manifested in the gracious person of Him whom He sent to give it to us. Not that this prediction excuses our deadness to it; this dislike of the religion given by God Himself—this distaste for its very name—must obviously be an insult to the Giver. Consider human life in some of its stages and conditions, in order to impress upon you the fact of this contrariety between ourselves and our Maker.

I. "Religion is a weariness." So feel even children before they can well express their meaning. Consider their amusements, their enjoyments, what they hope, what they desire, what they scheme, and what they dream about themselves in time future, when they grow up; and say what place religion holds in their hearts. Watch the reluctance with which they turn to religious duties, to saying their prayers or reading the Bible, and then judge.

II. Take next the case of young persons when they first enter into life. Is not religion associated in their minds with gloom, melancholy, and weariness? When men find their pleasure and satisfaction lie in society which proscribes religion, and when they deliberately and habitually prefer those amusements which have necessarily nothing to do with religion, such persons cannot view religion as God views it.

III. Passing to the more active occupations of life, we find that here too religion is confessedly felt to be wearisome; it is out of place. The transactions of worldly business find a way directly to the heart; they rouse, they influence. The name of religion, on the other hand, is weak and unimportant; it contains no spell to kindle the feelings of man, to make the heart beat with anxiety, and to produce activity and perseverance.

IV. The natural contrariety between man and his Maker is still more strikingly shown by the confessions of men of the world who have given some thought to the subject, and viewed society with somewhat of a philosophical spirit. Such men treat the demands of religion with disrespect and negligence, on the ground of their being unnatural.

V. That religion is in itself a weariness is seen even in the conduct of the better sort of persons who really, on the whole,

are under the influence of its spirit. So dull and uninviting is calm and practical religion, that religious persons are ever exposed to the temptation of looking out for excitements of one sort or other, to make it pleasurable to them

VI. "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." It is not His loss that we love Him not; it is our loss. He is all-blessed, whatever becomes of us. He is not less blessed because we are far from Him. Woe unto us, if in the day in which He comes from heaven, we see nothing desirable or gracious in His wounds; but instead, have made for ourselves an ideal blessedness, different from that which will be manifested to us in Him.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. v., p. 9 (see also J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vii., p. 13).

REFERENCES: liii. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1075; R. Milman, *The Love of the Atonement*, pp. 34, 46, 59, 66, 83, 91, 102. liii. 2, 3.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 277.

Chap liii., ver. 3.—"A Man of sorrows."

THIS was one of the marks by which Israel was to know his Christ. He was to be a Man of sorrows. The power by which He was to draw men to Himself, the charm by which He was to keep men near Himself, was not to be the charm of cheerfulness, not the pleasantness of His speech or the gladness of His character; it was to be just the opposite of this; it was to be His acquaintance with grief.

I. His own personal life was a sorrowful one. He was away from home, from His Father's presence. He was a Stranger in a strange land. From His childhood He was full of thoughts which He could not utter, because, if uttered, they were not understood. He was a lonely man. His sympathy with others by no means implied their sympathy with Him.

II. But His sorrows, like His labours, were for others. (1) Jesus Christ sorrowed over bodily suffering; (2) He sorrowed over mental suffering; (3) He sorrowed over spiritual suffering.

III. He was a Man of sorrows also, and chiefly, in relation to sin. (1) He had to see sin; (2) He had to bear sin.

IV. The subject teaches (1) that if it is as a Man of sorrows that Jesus Christ comes to us, it must be, first of all, as a memento of the fitness of sorrow to our condition as sinful men. (2) Again, only a Man of sorrows could be a Saviour for all men, and for the whole of life. (3) Sorrow, however deep, has its

solaces and its compensations. (*a*) Whatever it be, it is of the nature of sorrow to bring a man nearer to truth, nearer to reality, nearer therefore to hope. (*b*) Sorrow makes a man more useful. It gives him a new experience and a new sympathy.

V. The question remains, How do we stand, we ourselves, in reference to this Saviour?

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Christ the Light of the World*, p. 88.

Chap. liii., ver. 3.—"A Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

I. IN trying to bring into view some of the leading sorrows of our Lord's life, it is impossible not to begin with one which lay at the bottom of them all—that, namely, which arose from His close contact with the sin and defilement of this fallen and guilty world. The fact of our Lord's becoming a man involved the necessity of His living in immediate contact with what of all things in the universe was the most repulsive, hateful, and horrible to His soul. No doubt there were many beautiful things in the world, and even in men's lives, that could not but interest Him; but there was an awful drawback in the case of all. It was a world in arms against its Lord, a world divorced from its God.

II. The sorrow of unrequited love. "He came to His own and His own received Him not." There is something very sad in the repulse of a generous love and a love that seeks truly and disinterestedly the welfare of those loved; and we learn from Scripture that the rejection of His loving offers cut very deeply into the heart of Jesus.

III. A third grief arose from what is called, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the contradiction of sinners against Himself. He had to endure a great amount of keen, active opposition, often of a peculiarly trying kind. Looking at the number and variety of His enemies, He might have said, "They compassed Me about like bees." Hardly ever did He undertake an unembarrassed journey, or spend an easy hour. The contradiction of sinners became only more intense the longer He laboured. And it was the more trying because it was so successful.

IV. Among the sorrows of Jesus we notice, next, those which came from the infirmities of His own disciples. (1) There were vexations arising from their want of understanding, want of sympathy with Him in the great purposes of His life. (2) There were disappointments arising from their want of faith and of the courage of faith.

V. The last of the special griefs of Jesus was the sorrow

of His last conflict: the grief, so peculiar and so intense, of what He often called His hour. It is apparent, from all the records of His life, that our blessed Lord looked forward to His last span of life as one of peculiar horror. At this solemn crisis of His life, more than at any other part of it, it was His lot to feel the position of the sinbearer and the scapegoat—the position of one who stood in the sinner's place and bore the sinner's doom. It was then that God said, "Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow."

W. G. BLAIKIE, *Glimpses of the Inner Life of Our Lord*, p. 151.

I. THERE is an instance in Scripture, but we believe it stands alone, of Christ feeling and displaying gladness of spirit. A solitary exception there is to the melancholy description, "A Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" and by examining the exception we may get clearer views of the general character of Christ's sufferings. "*In that hour* Jesus rejoiced in spirit"—an hour in which there had been given Him such proofs of the prevalent power of His name as assured Him that through His sacrifice the kingdom of Satan would be finally demolished. In that hour the Saviour forgot the load of His griefs, and beheld Himself through His sacrifice exalted as a conqueror. For a moment He saw "the travail of His soul and was satisfied."

II. Christ seems to make it matter of thanksgiving that the Gospel had been "hid from the wise and prudent and revealed only to babes." And surprise might naturally be felt at this. Could the joy of the Redeemer have sprung from the thought that any were to perish? Is it not strange that an instance like this—an instance in which gladness is associated with anything so fearful as the everlasting destruction of the proud and self-sufficient—that this should be the single recorded exception to the accuracy of the melancholy description set forth in our text? It cannot be that Christ gave thanks because His gospel was hid from the wise and prudent; but He rejoices that though God had hid these things from the wise and prudent, He had nevertheless revealed them unto babes. Why might not the Saviour give thanks that the propagation of His gospel was to be such as would secure the honour of His Father? When with prophetic glance He looked onward to the struggle of His Church, and saw that in every land and in every age there would flow in multitudes of the mean and illiterate, while those excluded would be, for the most part, the mighty and the learned—excluded only because too proud to enter; and when

He thought how God would prevent the glorying of any flesh in His presence by thus choosing the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, and the foolish things to confound the wise, and thus out of the mouths of babes and sucklings perfecting praise,—we know not why He might not, in perfect consistence with that love which embraced every child of man, rejoice in the prospect on which He gazed—ay, though this rejoicing was the single exception to that intense, that ever overpressing sadness which is indicated in the emphatic and plaintive description of our text—"A Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2331.

REFERENCES: liii. 3.—W. Brock, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 693; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 79; D. Davies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 53; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1099; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 336; J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 102; R. Milman, *The Love of the Atonement*, pp. 117, 138, 150, 171, 183, 202.

Chap. liii., vers. 3, 4.

I. CONSIDER first the humiliation of our blessed Lord. Not only did He suffer extreme pain in body, but also in mind. The divinity of our Lord does not mitigate the intensity of His sufferings. A man's sorrows are mercifully shortened by his ignorance, short-sightedness, and infirmity; but Christ knew all, even the depth of sin in every heart; He foresaw all, even to the hour of death for each single soul for which He was suffering, even to the Day of Judgment, even to the endless misery of those who would crucify Him afresh. We see in Him no sign of a Divine power superseding human feeling and destroying it, nor anything of the hard indifference and pride of an earthly hero; but that which is most human and tender—pitiful and unswerving patience. In His parting with friends, in His meeting death, in His fear and trust, in His considerateness for others, He did and suffered all with the feelings and affections of man.

II. Notice the *glory* transparent through His humiliation. The result of these sufferings is salvation to others and glory to Himself. There appears even in His hours of deepest distress a character of unearthly greatness. At His first word, "I am He," the multitude goes backward and falls with a shock upon the ground. Just now He leant on disciples for support; again He shelters them from harm, saying, "If ye seek Me, let these go their way." Just now He stooped to take comfort of an

angel's hand; again by His Divine authority He keeps back whole legions of angels, lest they should interrupt His work. Likewise His death—though death is a very sign of human weakness—displays His power. He lays His life down freely, as He took it up; so that, in the sweet words of St. Bernard, we may truly say, "Who of us so gently boweth his head when he desires to sleep? To die is indeed of the weakness of man, but to die thus is of the power of God."

C. W. FURSE, *Sermons Preached at Richmond*, p. 208.

Chap. liii., ver. 4.—"He hath carried our sorrows."

JESUS CHRIST is the comforter we need, for—

I. He is an *afflicted* Man, the most afflicted of all the human race, a Man of sorrows. If He wishes to sympathise He has only to recall the past. We cannot take a single step in our gloomy path without finding some traces of Him. We cannot light upon an affliction through which He has not passed before us. He knows what sorrow is, and this is why He can comfort. We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.

II. Jesus Christ has not only shared our sorrows, He has *redeemed our sins*. Observe, that He truly represents humanity, not merely because He is its ideal type, but also because He has entered into full communion with its sufferings and made Himself partaker of its destiny. He has thrown Himself into the midst of the battle-field; He has in some sort covered us with His body, and so the chastisement which we deserved has fallen on Him. It is precisely because He is the only man on earth who, as a representative of our race, endured a punishment which He did not deserve, and did not add a fresh sin to a fresh pain, that His suffering rises to the height of a redeeming sacrifice. This redemption was completed on the Cross. It would not have been enough for the Son of man to have been pierced with all the sorrows of humanity except the last. It would not have been enough for Him to have endured all the consequences of man's rebellion except the last. Death is the wages of sin, and the striking sign of God's condemnation resting on a guilty world. These wages have been received for us by Him who did not deserve them, because He freely made Himself a partaker of our misery in order to save us. Our comforter is the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. In all our distresses, therefore,

and in all our shipwrecks, there is but one shelter, and that is the Cross.

E. DE PRESSENSÉ, *The Mystery of Suffering*, p. 16 (see also *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. iii., p. 205).

REFERENCES: liii. 4.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Divine Mysteries*, p. 5; C. Clemance, *To the Light Through the Cross*, p. 35. liii. 4, 5.—R. Tuck, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 8. liii. 4-6.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 200. liii. 5.—Bishop Moorhouse, *The Expectation of the Christ*, p. 63; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 249; *Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 834, vol. xviii., No. 1068; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 91; *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. i., p. 702. liii. 5, 6.—C. Clemance, *To the Light Through the Cross*, p. 46. liii. 6.—A. Watson, *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 68; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 694, vol. xvi., No. 925; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 94; W. Hay Aitken, *Mission Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 112; C. Clemance, *To the Light Through the Cross*, p. 195.

Chap. liii., ver. 7.—"He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth."

ST. PETER makes it almost a description of the Christian, that he loves Him whom he has not seen; speaking of Christ, he says, "Whom having not seen, ye love." Unless we have a true love of Christ, we are not His true disciples; and we cannot love Him unless we have heartfelt gratitude to Him; and we cannot duly feel gratitude unless we feel keenly what He suffered for us. No one who will but solemnly think over the history of those sufferings, as drawn out for us in the Gospels, but will gradually gain, through God's grace, a sense of them, will in a measure realise them, will in a measure be as if he saw them, will feel towards them as being not merely a tale written in a book, but as a true history, as a series of events which took place.

I. Our Lord is called a lamb in the text, that is, He was as defenceless and as innocent as a lamb is. Since, then, Scripture compares Him to this inoffensive and unprotected animal, we may, without presumption or irreverence, take the image as a means of conveying to our minds those feelings which our Lord's sufferings should excite in us. Consider how very horrible it is to read the accounts which sometimes meet us of cruelties exercised on brute animals. What is it that moves our very hearts and sickens us so much at cruelty shown to poor brutes? (1) They have done no harm; (2) they have no

power of resistance; it is the cowardice and tyranny of which they are the victims which makes their sufferings so especially touching. He who is higher than the angels deigned to humble Himself even to the state of the brute creation, as the Psalm says, "I am a worm, and no man; a very scorn of men, and the outcast of the people."

II. Take another example, and you will see the same thing still more strikingly. How overpowered should we be, not at the sight only, but at the very hearing, of cruelties shown to a little child—and why so? For the same two reasons, because it was so innocent, and because it was so unable to defend itself. We feel the horror of this, and yet we can bear to read of Christ's sufferings without horror. There is an additional circumstance of cruelty to affect us in Christ's history, which no instance of a brute animal's or of a child's sufferings can have; our Lord was not only guiltless and defenceless, but He had come among His persecutors in love.

III. Suppose that some aged and venerable person whom we have known as long as we could recollect anything, and loved and reverenced,—suppose such a one rudely seized by fierce men, made a laughing-stock, struck, spit on, scourged, and at last exposed with all his wounds to the gaze of a rude multitude who came and jeered him: what would be our feelings? But what is all this to the suffering of the holy Jesus, which we can bear to read of as a matter of course. A spirit of grief and lamentation is expressly mentioned in Scripture as a characteristic of those who turn to Christ. If then we do not sorrow, have we turned to Him?

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. v., p. 86 (see also J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vii., p. 133).

REFERENCES: liii. 7.—*Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 94; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1543; G. S. Barrett, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 221. liii. 7, 8.—C. Clemance, *To the Light Through the Cross*, p. 57. liii. 9—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 286. liii. 10.—J. Parsons, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 440; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 173, vol. x., No. 561; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 93; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 147; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 352; H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1966; C. Clemance, *To the Light Through the Cross*, pp. 100, 106, 115, 123, 130.

Chap. liii., ver. 11.—"He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied."

I. THE travail of His soul. This seems to be a short expression to indicate the whole of Christ's humiliation, more especially in

its inner and more spiritual aspect. We may take note of some of the ingredients that entered into the cup, although we cannot measure the degree of their bitterness:—(1) He who was from all eternity the beloved of His Father put His glory off and put on our nature. (2) He severed Himself from the company of the holy, who loved and worshipped Him, for the company of the unholy, who in feeble friendship vexed, or in open enmity crucified Him. (3) "He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (4) He met personally with the person of the wicked one in our quarrel. (5) His heart was often sore vexed by ignorance, selfishness, unfaithfulness, even of His own selected disciples. (6) The people for whose sake He came into the world—the Israel among whom He was born and bred—would none of Him. (7) The office of the priesthood, which He loved and honoured as God's institute to hold up the promise of redemption, was by those who held it prostituted to reject the counsel of God. (8) But alone, and above all, incomprehensible to us, yet awful, both for the part that we know and the part that we know not, is the desertion by the Father and the final descent of wrath, due to sin, on the Redeemer's soul.

II. The fruit that results from the travail of His soul. It is not to the sufferings in themselves that the Redeemer looks. Herein appears the greatness of His love. He looks over and past the travail of His soul, and fixes His regards on the results that it secures. The fruit is that twofold gain which was celebrated in the angels' song at the birth of Christ, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to the children of men." It is not merely the deliverance of a lost world from the doom that it deserved, it is the honour given to God by that deliverance. The means and end are linked together as the stalk and the grain in the cornfield; by the redemption of sinners God is glorified; and this double blessing is the fruit springing out of His soul's travail to which the risen Redeemer looks back yet with joy.

III. The satisfaction which the Saviour experiences in the results of the travail of His soul. He does not pass by, when His saving effort has been put forth, as if that were all; He lingers on the spot, and looks and longs to see men actually saved through His suffering for sin. "His delights were with the sons of men" from the past eternity, in anticipation of His saving work; and now that the work is completed, He is not content that His suffering should be fruitless. More than weary

benighted watchers wait for the dawning of the day; the Lord who suffered for us longs and looks for the multitudes coming to Himself for life, as the fruits of His dying.

W. ARNOT, *The Anchor of the Soul*, p. 52.

I. MARK the singularity and greatness which these words would seem to teach us to attach to Christ. "He shall see of the travail of His soul." These words imply a distinction between Christ and the Church, a distinction between Him and all the saved from among men. He, looking upon men, shall see the travail of His soul; they, looking to Him, shall behold the Source of their spiritual existence.

II. The passage indicates Christ's peculiar work, and attaches pre-eminent importance to that. The expression, "the travail of His soul," implies that all the glory of the Church, all in the salvation of sinners, the perfection of the faithful, whatever, in the consequences of His undertaking connected either with God or man, can be regarded as a source of satisfaction to Messiah—all is to be attributed to the fact that "His soul was made an offering for sin."

III. The next idea which the text warrants is the greatness of the results which are to flow from the Redeemer's sufferings. "He shall be satisfied."

IV. Consider the grounds of the Saviour's satisfaction, the results of His work to the world and man: (1) in the inconceivable number of the saved; (2) in the inconceivable perfection of their character.

T. BINNEY, *Sermons in King's Weighhouse Chapel*, 2nd series, p. 1.

REFERENCES: liii. 11.—*Pulpit Analyst*, vol. ii., p. 512; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 146. liii. 12.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 153; C. Clemance, *To the Light Through the Cross*, pp. 134, 149; T. Monod, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 327; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 458, vol. xxiii., No. 1385; *Ibid., Morning by Morning*, p. 90. liv 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 649; *Ibid., Evening by Evening*, p. 243; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 18. liv. 1-7.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 531.

Chap. liv. ver 4.—"For thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more."

SHALL I remember my sins in heaven?

I. There is a recollection inevitable. The identity of persons will involve an identity of consciousness. Abraham is in heaven, for example; and he feels to be the same individual

that was called out of Ur and made father of the Jewish people —not a totally distinct being, but the same being. What are the recollections which are inevitable? (1) "*I was a sinner.*" Can I remember that God loved the world and gave His Son, and that the blessed Jesus shed His blood for sin, and lose sight of the fact that I was cleansed from sin by that precious blood —that I was saved by the infinite mercy of God? (2) "*I was such a one on earth.*" That recollection surely is inevitable. Take Abraham. His recollections cannot be merely, "I was a patriarch," but, "I was such a patriarch." (3) "I was restored to God by such means and under such influences." This will be another recollection.

II. There is a remembrance of sins impossible. (1) By-and-bye memory will not be the faculty chiefly exercised and put forth. In heaven there will be no sadness, no solitude, no fear, no carefulness. Memory, therefore, will not be goaded as memory is now. Memory will have an inferior place. (2) The ruling idea, recollection, will not be the sins, the many sins, but the forgiving of those sins—the blotting out of those transgressions, so that the painful remembrance of sin will then be impossible. (3) Nothing in God's conduct will put sin forward. He tells you that He has cast your transgressions into the depths of the sea. (4) Within yourself there will be complete and conscious holiness. Your character will then be without spot or blemish, and you will know it. (5) You may have had companions here in iniquity, but you will have no unsaved companions in sin with you there. (6) You will be employed by-and-bye. Your employment will be all-absorbing, and it will be constant. How can a man think and dwell intently, and with commanding recollections, on the guilt that God has blotted out in such a scene as this? Why did Christ die, but that sin might be forgotten? For what did the Holy Spirit work, but that God's law might be written on the mind, and that both God and the sinner might remember iniquities no more.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 2nd series, No. 6.

REFERENCES: liv. 5.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 73, vol. xxiv., p. 42; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 170. liv. 6-13.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, 4th series, p. 44. liv. 7-9.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 253. liv. 7-10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1306. liv. 10.—A. Maclaren, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 225. liv. 11.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 352. liv. 11-13.—F. W. Farrar, *The Fall of Man*, p. 152. liv. 11-14.—J. Monro Gibson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 273. liv. 12.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 350. liv. 13.—

M. Dix, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, p. 169; J. J. Goadby, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 414; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 37. liv. 17.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 538; C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons Chiefly Practical*, p. 401; T. R. Stevenson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 244; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 310.

Chap. lv., ver. 1.—"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

We have here an exhortation from Almighty God to those who have sinned against Him, and the principle of the exhortation is so clear that it is impossible not to believe that it is the general principle of all God's exhortations to sinners; and the principle is this, that whoever feels his need of pardon can find pardon, that the sense of thirst is a sufficient warrant that God will give to the thirsty the water of life freely, that to be sensible of our poverty and to acknowledge it is a certain means of obtaining the supply of all our needs.

I. No simple-hearted man reading the life of our Lord Jesus Christ could have any doubt as to His extreme love to mankind and deep desire that all men should be saved; but unfortunately this simple view of the Gospel has been obscured by the theories of ingenious men, and a system of theology has been framed depending upon what is called the doctrine of *election*. It is held that, in the eternal councils of God, certain persons have been chosen by His mercy as heirs of eternal salvation; these are the elect; these are they for whom the Lord Jesus Christ died. When the ministers of Christ preach His gospel, the great end of their preaching is to call out and separate from the rest of mankind these chosen vessels of God's mercy.

II. This doctrine not only seems to modify the Gospel, but utterly to abolish and destroy it. Grant that there are millions upon millions of the race of mankind saved by this discriminating electing grace of God, still, so long as there is *one* human being who misses eternal life for want of such election, salvation must be that which no noble heart could desire; the notion of salvation being rendered valuable in a man's eyes because it is a free gift to him and is denied to his brother, is one which implies that the man so saved is a creature full of base selfishness, one who can rejoice because he is better off than his brother,—one who could pretend to love a Being of infinite power, who, according to this showing, is also a Being of infinite injustice.

III. The difficulty arising from the consideration of the

freedom of man's will on the one hand, and the omnipotence of God's grace on the other, is one which is philosophical rather than religious, and with which the religion of Christ as such has nothing whatever to do. It is enough for us to know that Christ *did* die for all, to know that God's offers of mercy through Him are free, and that when the thirsty are invited to drink freely the invitation is to be taken in its simplest and fullest meaning.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 153.

I. THE state of the persons addressed: (1) a state of want and privation; (2) a state which man has no power to rectify or remove.

II. The provision prepared. (1) Its nature. Food. The benefits of salvation through Christ. (2) The persons for whom it is intended. Of all ages, of all nations.

III. We are induced to come: (1) by the extent of the call; (2) by the freeness of the supply; (3) by the sufficiency of the provision; (4) by the impossibility of finding redemption elsewhere.

G. BROOKS, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 140.

REFERENCES: lv. 1.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 9; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 140; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 199, vol. xx., No. 1161, vol. xxix., No. 1726; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 41. lv. 1, 2.—D. Moore, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3278. lv. 1-4.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xviii., p. 19. lv. 1-5.—C. Short, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 141.

Chap. lv., ver. 2.—"Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?"

CONSIDER what are some of the good investments in life, which bring in solid advantages.

I. First among the gains of life is peace of mind, and for that the investment is simply and alone acts of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You must commit your whole self, as a poor, miserable sinner, absolutely to His grace and power. Do it fearlessly, and the result is sure; there will come back a sense of pardon; and the interest of that pardon, if I may so call it, pays you every day and every moment. And peace is that "meat to eat which the world knows not of;" it satisfies.

II. The next thing which you will do well to traffic in is truth, the clear knowledge of God's truth. I do not say that any man can get truth without labour. It is the wages of

severe work. And you will have your recompense in that delightful feeling of the discovery of new truth.

III. Next to peace and truth as the gains of life, I have to place the affections of our fellow-creatures. Every affection is a real possession, and well worth the purchase, cost it what it may, so we do not barter truth. That you may have much love, you must go out of yourself, you must cultivate and show sympathy. Christ's sympathy did more than Christ's miracles. If you feel, not for a person, but with a person, it is astonishing how it will make itself felt in a way you cannot trace. There will be a knitting together of your common manhood, and to have it is a very pleasant thing, and it makes life's food.

IV. Everything which we give or do for God is actually laying up for us in heaven, transferred from this insecure and bankrupt world to the high places of that safe bank, and it is gone before and awaits us there against the time we come; every day we may increase that hidden treasure within the veil, and we shall receive it all back again at last a hundredfold.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 10th series, p. 192.

Chap. lv., vers. 2, 3.—"Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness," etc.

I. WE have here an invitation, addressed to us by Jehovah Himself, to hearken diligently unto Him, to incline our ear, and to come to Him. There is something peculiarly touching in the invitations of the Word of God, which, if men would but pause and reflect, could not fail to make an impression upon their hearts. "Hearken diligently unto Me," God says; "incline your ear." He would take you, as it were, each one separately by himself, and reason and counsel with you. The matters of which He would treat with you are too important to be handled in a crowd, too sacred to be discussed amid the noise and bustle of worldly avocations. The Lord will have sinners *come* to Him; He will have all distance annihilated between your souls and Him; He will have you brought into the closest relationship and communion with Himself; He will have you not only within hearing of His voice, but in His very embrace.

II. The reasons for our closing with this invitation are two, and each of them is very weighty. (1) You will be vast gainers if you follow the leadings of the Divine Spirit, and go into

conference with God, and embrace His terms. "Hear, and your soul shall delight itself in fatness; hear, and your soul shall live." The life of the believer is the only life of real enjoyment upon earth. What will it be when he dwells with God Himself? (2) To refuse the offer is to lose the soul. "He that sowed to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption," and that for ever. He who will not embrace Christ must stand before God with all his guilt upon his head—guilt that cannot then be pardoned; for there remaineth now no more sacrifice for sin.

A. D. DAVIDSON, *Lectures and Sermons*, p. 472.

REFERENCES: lv. 4.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1507; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 144.

Chap. lv., ver. 6.—"Seek ye the Lord while He may be found."

I. CONSIDER what we are to understand by seeking the Lord. It is in His double aspect, combined but not contradictory character, as at once just and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus, as a God of justice to punish sin in the surety, and as a God of mercy to pardon it in the sinner, that we are to seek the Lord, and all the blessings which in that gracious character He has and He promises to bestow. Thus, to seek the Lord is just to approach Him by faith.

II. Inquire when the Lord is to be found, and we remark, (1) that the Lord, as bestowing the pardon of sin and salvation on the soul, is to be found in this world, not in another; (2) that the Lord is not to be found on a deathbed; (3) that the Lord is more likely to be found now than at any future time.

III. The shortness and uncertainty of life are strong reasons for seeking pardon and salvation now.

T. GUTHRIE, *The Way to Life*, p. 78.

REFERENCE: lv. 6.—Bishop Walsham How, *Plain Words*, 2nd series, p. 47.

Chap. lv., vers. 6, 7.—"Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near," etc.

I. OBSERVE the order of the steps of grace. You are first to feel after God in your own heart, "if haply you may find Him;" and when this has brought you a little near, then you are to call out—then you are to pray; then you are to give up some known sin—every wicked way, and every wrong thought. That is an indispensable condition. Then comes the meeting of a pardoned soul with God, and next the

appropriation of the Lord as our own covenanted God; and then the sweetness of that perfect love and forgiveness of the Father.

II. Notice, further, that at each step there is an opportunity of finding God, and these opportunities are limited. We are to expect answers to prayer as we give up outward sins, which it is easy to do, and inward sin, which is the more difficult. What is nearness? Is God always near? The Holy Ghost makes nearness. He unites us to God. That presence of the Holy Ghost in the soul is nearness. If the Holy Ghost were to leave you, you would never find God—the life in the Spirit would be over. Hence the tremendous emphasis of the words, "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found."

III. How can the wicked forsake his way? By prayer, by occupation, by filling the mind with what is good, by having more of the Holy Spirit, by new and better pleasures, higher objects, worthier influences, more fixed motives, by loving constant thoughts of Jesus—this leads on to the end.

IV. There are *crises* in life. Whatever account you have to settle with God, settle it now. There are two "nows" in the Bible which ought never to be separated. One stands out in the brightest rays, the other retires into the deepest shadows. "*Now* is the accepted time." "*Now* they are hid from thine eyes." J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 11th series, p. 29.

REFERENCES: lv. 6, 7.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 38. lv. 6-9.—C. Short, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 158.

Chap. lv., ver. 7.—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

I. LOOK, first, at the Counsellor. (1) He who speaks to the wicked man, and to the unrighteous man, is He who made all things. The Father of the wicked is here speaking to the wicked. (2) He who speaks knows every wicked man and unrighteous man. (3) He who speaks hates evil. (4) He who speaks has power to destroy the wicked in hell. (5) It is the redeeming God who here addresses the wicked man.

II. Look, secondly, at His counsel. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him come back. The advice requires (1) self-inspection; (2) the admission of truth as to the character of the way, and as to the nature of the thoughts; (3) the resistance of an inclination to go on; (4) submission to the conviction that the way is

evil, and the abandonment of every unrighteous purpose, with actual departure from the path of open and actual transgression; (5) appeal to God's mercy, and for help and reconciliation.

III. The counselled. The wicked and the unrighteous man. God has singled out particularly three classes: (1) the thirsty; (2) the impoverished; (3) the disappointed.

IV. The promise. "He will abundantly pardon." (1) The promise is conditional, yet it is sure. (2) The promise is made to characters. There is, therefore, an indefiniteness which may well encourage us. I may address these words to every wicked man, no matter what his wickedness consists of; and to every unrighteous man, no matter what his evil purposes may be.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 2nd series, No. 16.

REFERENCES: lv. 7.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 40; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, pp. 256, 259; *Ibid., Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1195; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 141; D. L. Moody, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 341. lv. 8.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 23; W. M. Taylor, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 231.

Chap. lv., vers. 8, 9.—"**My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.**"

I. THE errors, in opposition to which the doctrine of the text is to be asserted, are those connected with what has been technically termed anthropomorphism.

II. The testimony of the text is not to be overstrained. There are qualifications and limitations that must be practically observed in applying it. (1) We are expressly taught to judge of the heart of God by what is in the heart of man. "Like as a father pitieth his children," etc. (2) But for such a liberty and warrant as we now contend for some of the most affecting of the inspired pleadings and promises of the Bible would be cold and heartless. (3) There is a great truth to be brought out here, that the perfection of God, in respect of which He is to be contrasted with man, consists not in the absence of sensibility, but in its very intensity and purity and power.

II. The applications of this truth are as manifold as are the exigencies of human experience. (1) It is because His thoughts are not your thoughts that God justifies freely. (2) For the same reason the pardon He dispenses is very free, unreserved, as well as unconditional. (3) But most peremptory, authori-

tative, sovereign, is the Gospel call, as a call to repentance as well as to reconciliation. (4) The promises of God are and must be most faithful, because His thoughts are not our thoughts.

R. S. CANDLISH, *The Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 264.

I. THE mystery of Christ's birth and of our new birth. As in many other places of the prophet Isaiah, so here in the text, the Almighty commends to us this thought, that we should learn from the very sight of the heaven above us, not to lose, in our sense of God's mercy, the deep trembling awe and reverence with which we ought to regard all His doings; not to dream that we understand them; nor to conclude that they fail because we do not yet see the fruit of them,—but to labour diligently in the way of our duty, and for the rest to be silent before Him, and wait on Him with adoring patience.

II. This same lesson, which the very height of the heaven was intended to teach all mankind, seems to be brought before us Christians in a wonderful, unspeakable way, when we are called on to remember our Lord's nativity. The very thing by itself, God Incarnate, was the wonder of all wonders—a matter surely as much above the thoughts and conjectures of man as the heaven is higher than the earth: that the Creator should become a creature; that the Lord most holy and true should join Himself to a sinful race and become one of them, to deliver them from the evil consequences of their sin. But even suppose the thought of God's becoming man had entered into any man's heart, the circumstances of His coming into the world were far unlike what we should have imagined. Consider the quietness of this great event. How in the silence of the night, in a town of no great size or wealth, in an outhouse of an inn, the great God came visibly among His creatures, as it had been prophesied concerning Him. How poor and lowly was everything around Him who was come to bring us all the treasures of heaven!

III. From this great event we learn: (1) Not to doubt that God's purposes, however to us unlikely, will be one way or another accomplished. (2) Not only in the great concerns of the world and of the kingdom of God, but also in what relates to each of us particularly, we are to be quite sure that the Almighty has His own purpose concerning us, and that He is working around us and within us even in the most ordinary things. (3) The Collect for Christmas Day teaches that our Lord's taking our nature upon Him, and His birth on this

day of a pure virgin, answers in some remarkable way to our being regenerate and made His children by adoption and grace, *i.e.*, our baptism. As Christ at His nativity showed Himself in our human nature, so we at our new birth, St. Peter tells us, are made partakers of His Divine nature.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. iv., p. 302.

REFERENCES: lv. 8, 9.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas ana Epiphany*, p. 27; C. Morris, *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. ii., p. 60; J. Foster, *Lectures*, 2nd series, p. 129. lv. 8-10.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 13; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 676, vol. xxiii., No. 1387. lv. 10, 11.—T. P. Boulver, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 232; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 272; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 201; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 204; *Ibid.*, *Sermons*, 1870, p. 149. lv. 10-13.—C. Short, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 173. lv. 11.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 162; D. Moore, *Penny Pulpit*. No. 349.

Chap. lv., ver. 12.—"For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace."

To the Jew in Isaiah's time this promise doubtless bore reference to three things: the return from the seventy years' captivity; their ultimate restoration, first to their own land, and then to Christ; and God's way of dealing with each individual's own soul. To us it stands only in the last reference; to us the words are simply spiritual.

I. The "going out" appears to relate to that great moral exodus when a man emerges from a state of nature into a state of grace, from bondage to liberty, from darkness to light, from the world to Christ. This is indeed to be with joy. The being led forth denotes the further experiences of the Christian,—God's conduct of him by the way; his future courses, and especially the manner in which he is brought out at last—out of this life into a better; and all this is to be "with peace."

II. What is joy? (1) Novelty of perception. It is a wonderfully new feeling when a soul first tastes the promises and grasps its own interest in Christ. (2) Keenness of perception. Keen is the first sense of sin to a penitent, and keen is the first sense of pardon to a believer. In that early dawn the soul's atmosphere is so clear that every object stands out in its distinctness. (3) Sweetness of perception. Sweeter are those perceptions than they are keen. Are they not the touches of the Holy Ghost? They are all about beautiful things—saints and angels, a holy heaven, and a perfect Jesus.

III. "And be led forth with peace." As we go on in the spiritual life the sense of sin grows deeper and deeper; and a deep sense of weakness, nothingness, and guilt, combining with a fuller sense of pardon and love, makes joy peace. To a mind led and taught of God all the changes and chances of life lend themselves to peace. A great affliction is a deep fountain of peace; the very agitation hushes, and it makes all troubles afterwards so very small. Another and another promise fulfilled every day is always enlarging the rock underneath our feet. Another and another answer to prayer is always strengthening the arguments for the future. Another and another new drop of the knowledge of Christ is always swelling the tide, till the "peace flows like a river," because we see the "righteousness of Christ" as the waves of the sea.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 4th series, p. 281.

REFERENCES: lv. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 833; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 20.

Chap. lvi., ver. 2.—"Blessed is the man . . . that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it."

I. THE Sabbath is "polluted" when it is spent in mere idleness.

II. When it is devoted to worldly amusement.

III. By all labour which may not fairly come under the description of works of necessity and mercy.

J. N. NORTON, *Every Sunday*, p. 121.

REFERENCES: lvi. 2.—E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, 1st series, p. 273. lvi. 7.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 3rd series, p. 92; W. Braden, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 177. lvi. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1437. lvi. 12.—J. M'C. Hussey, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 129; A. Maclaren, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 234. lvii. 1.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 41. lvii. 1, 2.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol vii., p. 47. lvii. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 684; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 145. lvii. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1579; H. W. Beecher, *Plymouth Pulpit Sermons*, 4th series, p. 67.

Chap. lvii., vers. 15-21.

I. A CONTRITE heart does not merely mean a broken heart; it means more. It means literally a heart crushed, a heart ground to powder. You can have no stronger word. It was this heart which God wished to breed in these rebellious Jews. A heart like Isaiah's, when he said, after having seen God's glory, "Woe is me! for I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell

among a people of unclean lips." A heart like Jeremiah's, when he said, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears." A heart like Daniel's, when he confessed before God that to him and all his people belonged shame and confusion of face.

II. With God one day is as a thousand years. In one day of bitter misery He can teach us lessons which we could not teach ourselves in a thousand years of reading and studying, or even of praying. In sorrow, He is making short work with our spirits. He grinds hearts to powder, that they may be broken and contrite before Him; but only that He may heal them; that out of the broken fragments of the hard, proud, self-deceiving heart of stone He may create a new heart of flesh, human and gentle, humble and simple. And then He will return and have mercy. He will show that He does not wish our spirits to fail before Him, but to grow and flourish before Him to everlasting life. He will show us that He was nearest when He seemed farthest off; and that just because He is the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, who dwelleth in the high and holy place, for that very reason He dwells also with the humble and contrite heart, because that heart alone can confess His height and its own lowliness—confess its own sin and His holiness; and so can cling to His majesty by faith, and partake of His holiness by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit.

C. KINGSLEY, *Town and Country Sermons*, p. 302.

REFERENCES: lvii. 15.—J. Oswald Dykes, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 52 (see also *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 237); C. Kingsley, *The Good News of God*, p. 370; *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. iii., p. 592; C. Molyneux, *Penny Pulpit*, Nos. 280, 281; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, pp. 43, 142; E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, 1st series, p. 74; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 147. lvii. 16.—D. Moore, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3087; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 142. lvii. 16-18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1490. lvii. 18.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxii., No. 1279; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 245. lvii. 19.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1558; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 143. lviii. 2.—*Ibid.*, p. 262.

Chap. lviii., vers. 3-7.—"Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and Thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and Thou takest no knowledge," etc.

I. THE Hebrew prophet's deliverance here is not in condemnation or disparagement of all fasting. The people of his day were in the habit, it appears, of denying themselves food, and

assuming postures of mourning and humiliation as an offering to the Almighty, and an appeal to Him for His recognition and regard, *while* they were living, and persisted in living, unrighteously and unlovingly. Ever and anon, they would set apart a time in which to make themselves generally uncomfortable, by going without their meals, and spreading sackcloth and ashes over themselves, as an act towards Jehovah, and a call upon Him for His favour, *while* their lives were rank with injustice and selfishness. This was what their religious teacher inveighed against so sharply: the idea that to stop once and again in a course of bad conduct, and lie in the dust, with bent heads, and empty, unfed mouths, was a ceremony acceptable to God, and would suffice to atone in a measure for their habitual covetousness and cruelty.

II. While Isaiah is denouncing the superstition of his countrymen in thinking to compound for their transgressions by bodily abstinences and austerities, he is led, it would appear, to consider the practice of fasting with outward signs of humiliation and mourning, and to ask the question, "Is it ever what the Lord desires and demands?" And the answer of the prophet's soul is, "No." Men will and must fast if heavily oppressed with grief, and they may and should fast if it will help them at all in the effort to rise above false passion, and subordinate the lower nature to the higher. But to fast and lie in the dust, as an offering to God, as an exercise toward Him, for Him to look upon and be attracted by, is altogether vain and worthless. The one true repentance is to turn from the ways of sin into the ways of righteousness. The fear of the Lord is to depart from evil, and if a man be departing from evil he need not trouble about any further confession or repentance, except in so far as his own heart should compel him. In departing from evil he is fasting the fast which God chooses, which is not to afflict his soul with abstinence for a day, and to bow down his head as a bulrush, but to "loosen the bands of wickedness," and to "deal his bread to the hungry."

S. A. TIPPLE, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 200.

REFERENCES: lviii. 4.—J. G. Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 145. lviii. 5.—F. W. Farrar, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxi., p. 129.

Chap. lviii., vers. 6, 7.—"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? . . . Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house?" etc.

THIS passage is one of those in which the purity and holiness

peculiar to the Gospel seem to be foretokened in the morality of the prophetic canon. Isaiah has been termed the Evangelical Prophet; and he is so, not more in the transcendent clearness of his predictions of evangelic facts, than in the corresponding brightness of his anticipations of evangelic holiness. As the inspired writers approached the great centre of purity, they became more and more deeply tinged with the glory they were approaching. The twilight clouds were red with the coming Sun.

I. Isaiah and his brother-prophets were holier and heavenlier and richer in the works of love upon an anticipated Christ than we are in a Christ already our crucified example. These men of God knew no divorce between belief and love, between living perpetually in the presence of a benevolent Lord and imitating His benevolence to their fellow-creatures. As it is the spirit of truth that has solemnised the union of the principle of faith with the works of charity, so it is, and in all ages has been, the master policy of the spirit of evil to effect their separation. This same purpose of separation which in darker ages the enemy of man sought to accomplish by making faith stand for a catalogue of superstitious observances—similar to the fasts of which the prophet speaks in the text—he now attempts to accomplish by exaggerating and perverting its more legitimate signification.

II. The whole religious providence of God towards man in every age has been a system operating by the combined influences of faith and love,—both directed towards His own perfect essence. In our existing condition, what is faith but love relying on support? What is love but faith forgetting the support in the supporter? Every progressive step in attaining habits of compassion and kindness upon earth must necessarily be a step towards estimating and loving Him who is the essential Spirit of benevolence. The love of man is the type and shadow of the love of God—the first step upon a pathway that conducts to paradise. The people of God are here engaged with the rudiments and images of those affections which are to be the duty and the happiness of their eternity.

W. Archer Butler, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, 2nd series, p. 148.

References: lviii. 6, 7.—T. Dale, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2977; W. M. Punshon, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 317. lviii. 6-8.—S. Pearson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 225.

Chap. lviii., ver. 8.—"Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward."

I. That the word "prophet" should so early in our language have come to be used as a synonym for a predictor is only an instance of the prevailing error which consists in looking for signs and wonders as evidence of Divine power. If a man possesses a superhuman commission, he must be able to do superhuman acts. Such is the vulgar reasoning. And as the prophets, men inspired by God, have looked forward into the future and spoken of what they saw, these predictions have been seized upon as the characteristic feature of the speaker's mission, and the noble office of prophet has come to be regarded as that of a worker of magic. The true seer is not the magician, but the pleader for the righteousness of God.

II. The attitude of the prophet Isaiah is that of the forward-looking man. His eye is not so much lifted to heaven, or bent downwards upon the people, as it is turned ever towards the horizon, waiting for the dawn. It is for all nations that he looks forward with hope. The keynote of his song has been struck long before in the promise to Abraham, that in his seed should all nations of the world be blessed. The prophets were commissioned to instil the truth which might have saved the peculiar people from the danger of exclusiveness. They saw from the height on which they stood, alone with God, the future of the world lying like a map at their feet, and bathed in the sunshine of God's favour. The prophet was a predictor. He could not fail to be. The firmer his faith in God, the farther a man sees. The "seer" owes his power to faith. The believer sees and knows what the unbeliever cannot see or know. These are the two notes of the prophetic character,—its hopefulness and its catholicity.

A. Ainger, *Sermons in the Temple Church*, p. 268.

References: lviii. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1793. lviii. 11.—*Ibid.*, vol. xiii., No. 736; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 364. lviii. 12.—*Pulpit Analyst*, vol. iii., p. 296. lviii. 13, 14.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. ix., p. 267; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 257; H. F. Burder, *Sermons*, p. 426; H. W. Beecher, *Plymouth Pulpit*, 4th series, p. 213.

Chap. lix., ver. 1.—"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear."

I. The case of the Jews, to whom these words were first

addressed, does not shake our confidence in God's willingness or power to save. They have been oppressed, persecuted, trodden under foot; and, like the grass which grows thickest when trodden on, they have thriven under oppression—bearing a charmed life—the true sons of their fathers in the land of Egypt; of whom it was said, the more they were afflicted, the more they grew. Living, multiplying, flourishing, amid circumstances that by all the common laws of existence should have been fatal to their existence, they illustrate my text—proving the unchanging and unchangeable power of God as plainly as Daniel safe among hungry lions, or the bush that burned and, burning, was not consumed.

II. Consider the truths expressed in these words. (1) God's power to save is neither lost nor lessened. (2) The Lord's power to hear and answer prayer is neither lost nor lessened; His ear is not heavy, that it cannot hear.

III. This truth is full of comfort and encouragement (1) to God's people; (2) to sinners.

T. GUTHRIE, *Speaking to the Heart*, p. 38.

REFERENCES: lix. 1, 2.—Bishop Walsham How, *Plain Words*, 2nd series, p. 57. lix. 2.—J. E Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 4th series, p. 6; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 66. lix. 5.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 221. lix. 9.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 884. lix. 15, 16.—R. Tuck, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 344. lix. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 832. lix. 19.—*Ibid.*, vol. xii., No. 718.

Chap. lx., ver. 1.—"Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

TAKING these words into the full illumination of Christianity, they express, very beautifully, the awakening of a man to his true work in the world. It is because the "glory of the Lord has risen upon him," that the Christian is able to reflect the light which has entered his soul.

Notice: I. The dawning of the light: "Thy light has come." Man is not in a world of darkness, but blind in a world of light. All he needs is the opening of the spiritual eye, that the light may be seen. Our little life is enveloped by the spiritual world. Behind the appearance of earth, beyond the waste and decay of these frail bodies, it stands for ever in unclouded splendour. When the soul is born again, it seems as if the curtains of night were suddenly withdrawn, and the whole spiritual universe flashed in a moment into day; because until the dark veil of the carnal was dissolved the soul had been blinded to the

invisible. There are three requisites for the dawning of the light—three stages in the history of the soul's enlightenment: (1) spiritual penitence; (2) spiritual love; (3) spiritual prayer.

II. The awakening call. "Arise, shine." That summons is the inevitable result of the dawning of the light. When God is felt to be near a man thus—in penitence, love, and prayer—that man is imperatively bound to reflect the glory which has risen in his heart; to bear witness of the light which has pierced and transformed his soul. This is based on a great principle, viz., the deepest emotion in a man's nature must reveal itself in his life. There is no such thing as a life-long hypocrisy: sooner or later the master-passion within a man will glow to a red-heat, and he will stand transparent before the eye of the world. When God enters the soul, it shines unconsciously, and men feel its secret charm. The glory of the Lord manifests itself in life. (1) In the majesty of holiness. Christian separateness is not external nonconformity. It is being in the world and yet above it, having saintly separateness of soul amidst all the duties of life, making men feel that your inner life is apart from the business of the world, that your heart is in eternity. (2) In the beauty of unselfishness. The life of God is the life of the cross in the heart. (3) In the earnestness of your efforts for men.

E. L. HULL, *Sermons*, 1st series, p. 70.

THE glory of the Christian Church.

I. That this and other similar prophecies had their measure of fulfilment when Christ came we all know; when His Church, built upon the apostles and prophets, wonderfully branched out from Jerusalem as a centre into the heathen world round about, and gathering into it men of all ranks, languages, and characters, moulded them upon one pattern, the pattern of their Saviour, in truth and righteousness. Thus the prophecies concerning the Church were fulfilled at that time in two respects—its sanctity and its catholicity. It is often asked, Have these prophecies had then and since then perfect accomplishment? Or are we to expect a more complete Christianising of the world than has hitherto been vouchsafed it? Consider the state and prospects of the Christian Church in this respect.

II. Whereas God is one and His will one, and His purpose one and His work one—whereas all He is and does is absolutely perfect and complete, independent of time and place and sovereign over creation—yet in His actual dealings with

this world, that is, in all in which we see His providence, He seems to work by a process, by means and ends, by steps, by victories hardly gained and failures repaired and sacrifices ventured. Thus it is only when we view His dispensations at a distance, as the angels do, that we see their harmony and their unity; whereas Scripture, anticipating the end from the beginning, places at their very head and first point of origination all that belongs to them respectively in their fulness.

III. The Christian Church had in the day of its nativity all that fulness of holiness and peace named upon it, and sealed up to it, which beseemed it viewed as God's design—viewed in its essence, as it is realised at all times and under all circumstances—viewed as God's work without man's co-operation—viewed as God's work in its tendency and in its ultimate blessedness; so that the titles given it on earth are a picture of what it will be absolutely in heaven. The same interpretation will apply to the Scripture account of the elect people of God, which is but the Church of Christ under another name. In their election are sealed up, to be enrolled and enjoyed in due season, the successive privileges of the heirs of light. In God's purpose—according to His grace, in the tendency and ultimate effects of His dispensation—to be called and chosen is to be saved. For God's providence moves by great and comprehensive laws; and His word is the mirror of His designs, not of man's partial success in thwarting His gracious will.

IV. It is our duty to walk by faith; therefore we will take the promises in faith; we will believe they are fulfilled, and enjoy the fruit of them before we see it. We will unlearn the expectation of any public display of God's glory in the edification of His Church, seeing she is all glorious within, in that inward shrine, made up of faithful hearts, and inhabited by the Spirit of grace.

J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 79.

I. Notice the tidings announced in the text: "Thy light is come." That language is very significant when we remember that Jesus said of Himself at the beginning of His public ministry, "I am the Light of the world."

II. While Jesus Christ, the true Light, "shines in the darkness," and the darkness does not receive it, it is His body, the Church, and not the unbelieving world, which is lighted up at His glorious appearing. Accordingly, the prophet, in the text, says of *Zion* and of her only, "Thy light is come."

III. The glad announcement made to Zion was designed to exert a practical effect on the daily conduct of her children. "Arise, shine." Christians are reminded that, if faithful to their holy calling, they will "shine as lights in the world."

J. N. NORTON, *Old Paths*, p. 73.

REFERENCES: lx. 1.—D. Moore, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3521; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvi., p. 13; *Short Sermons for Family Reading*, p. 49; A. Watson, *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 156; F. W. Farrar, *The Fall of Man*, p. 382; E. L. Hull, *Sermons*, 1st series, p. 61; C. J. Vaughan, *Good Words*, 1869, p. 101; J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 69; S. Baring-Gould, *Preacher's Pocket*, p. 43. lx. 1-3.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 10; G. Huntington, *Sermons for the Holy Seasons of the Church*, p. 27; A. Maclaren, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 232; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 32.

Chap. lx., vers. 2, 3.

THE manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles.

I. The first token that was shown to the Gentile world that the great Light had arisen which was to cast its beams over them as well as over the small nation which alone hitherto had known God was the star, the wonderful star, which was seen in the sky. This star appeared but twice to the Magi—once to tell them to set out, and once to tell them they had arrived. All the rest was faith. Faith that made them watch; faith that made them gather their gifts; faith that made them set forth on their long journey and maintain it to the end.

II. It was the manifestation of the Redeemer, the Light of the world, to the Gentiles. But much had yet to be done before the Gentiles were received into the full equality of privilege and grace with the Jews. It was above thirty years yet before the rending of the veil of the Temple showed that the partition wall was broken down by the death of Christ, which divided Jew from Gentile; still longer before the commission was given to go and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Holy Trinity; still longer before the vision at Joppa and the gift of the Holy Spirit at Cæsarea bade St. Peter baptize Cornelius, the first Gentile Christian, into the Church.

III. Let us claim our share in that exceeding great joy with which the wise men saw the first brightness of that star when they saw it in the East. If we do truth—that is to say, if we really try to please God, by living according to His will, by constant prayers, by confessing our sins, and ever asking His pardoning grace to enable us to obey better—then we *come to*

the light, and our deeds will be made manifest that they are wrought in God.

G. MOBERLY, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 36.

REFERENCE: lx. 3.—Bishop Walsham How, *Plain Words*, 2nd series, p. 34.

Chap. lx., ver. 5.—"Thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged."

ENLARGEMENT of heart is the true description of that higher progress to which it is ever the aim of God to lead us; the text pictures the progress, and unfolds to us both the pain and the joy. The language of the prophet is intended to present to our mind's eye that nameless dread, that inward shrinking and shuddering, with which the forecast shadows of great crises affect us as we approach them, and through which lies our passage to a larger freedom, a larger power and a larger joy.

II. It is very wonderful how all the great things which have largely influenced the world have grown from small, narrow, hard, but intensely vital beginnings, and have grown by enlargement of heart. Look, from this point of view, at the greatest of all institutions—the Church. There is a clear orderly progress in the development of a Divine idea and in the effect of a Divine influence on man from the day when Abraham "crossed the river" until now. The Church is the depositary of this sacred counsel, this redeeming purpose, which underlies all man's history; and again and again the heart of the Church has been enlarged in seasons of sore strain and dread to take in those wider views of its vocation, its mission from God, and for God, for which, in the order of Providence, "the fulness of time" was come.

II. A kindred, or rather a parallel, course of enlargement has gone on in similar society. While God has been enlarging His Church, to comprehend better the meaning and the scope of His Gospel on the one hand, He has been enlarging, on the other, man's heart to receive and to rejoice in it. And, looking at it only from the secular side, it is most notable that the periods of man's greatest enlargement, when intellect and spirit have broken out of the old bounds and have occupied a new world, have been ages of convulsion and revolution, of ceaseless conflict and awful dread. The vision of a fairer order has never been wanting to mankind; when the path has been darkest, this vision has always been brightest; it is in the seasons of strain and dread that the fairest pictures of this higher order of things have

been portrayed. There is travail everywhere through all the spheres of creation; and man's life, standing as it does on the summit level of mere creature development, travails in birth with a kingdom of heaven,—a kingdom with a new commandment: Love one another.

J. Baldwin Brown, *The Higher Life*, p. 92.

References: lx. 5.—E. Hale, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 58. lx. 6.—*Preacher's Lantern*, vol. i., p. 427. lx. 7.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 409. lx. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 63; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 262; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 276; J. R. Macduff, *Communion Memories*, p. 62.

Chap. lx., ver. 13.—"The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I will make the place of My feet glorious."

I. Every attentive reader of Scripture must be aware what stress is there laid upon the duty of costliness and magnificence in the public service of God. Even in the first rudiments of the Church, Jacob, an outcast and wanderer, after the vision of the ladder of angels, thought it not enough to bow down before the unseen presence, but parted with—or, as the world would say, wasted—a portion of the provisions he had with him for the way in an act of worship. The Book of Exodus shows what cost was lavished upon the tabernacle even in the wilderness; the Books of Kings and Chronicles set before us the devotion of heart, the sedulous zeal, the carelessness of expense or toil, with which the first temple was reared upon Mount Zion. The glories of the Christian sanctuary were not to be less outward and visible, though they were to be more spiritual also.

II. It may be objected that such outward splendour in the worship of God is spoken of in terms of censure or jealousy by our Lord and Saviour. Thus, He says, while enumerating the offences of the Pharisees: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess." And when His disciples pointed out to our Lord the great size of the stones of which the temple was built—a temple, let it be noted, thus ornamented by the impious Herod—He answered abruptly: "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." The answer surely is easy. Our Saviour condemned the show of great attention to outward things, while inward things which were more important were neglected. Thus He says Himself in His denunciation of the

Pharisees: "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other"—the inward—"undone." What Scripture reproves is the inconsistency, or what is more solemnly called the "hypocrisy of being fair without and foul within," of being religious in appearance and not in truth. If it is an inconsistency to pretend to religion outwardly while we neglect it inwardly, it is also an inconsistency, surely, to neglect it outwardly while we pretend to it inwardly. St. Paul says expressly: "If thou *shalt confess with thy mouth* the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Now, to adorn the worship of God our Saviour, to make the beauty of holiness visible, to bring offerings to the sanctuary, to be curious in architecture and reverent in ceremonies,—all this external religion is a sort of profession and confession; it is nothing but what is natural, nothing but what is consistent, in those who are cultivating the life of religion within. It is most unbecoming; most offensive, in those who are not religious; but most becoming, most necessary, in those who are so.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 295.

REFERENCES: lx. 13.—W. Walters, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 253. lx. 17.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 327.

Chap. lx., ver. 18.—"Thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise."

CONSIDER how salvation is a wall and how gates are praise.

I. There are three safeties which a sinner wants. First, he wants to be saved from the condemnation of his sins; then he wants to be saved from the power of his sins; and then he wants to be saved from the conflict and presence of his sins. Therefore a man's salvation comes to him with three unfoldings. This threefold salvation is, to every man that receives it, as a wall. On the one side, towards the adversary, it is a wall of fire; on the other side, as it shows itself to him that is within it, it is shelter. It is beauteous, as with all bright and precious stones, inlaid with all the loveliness and the attributes of God. And whatever comes through that wall to touch a man has first touched and pierced his Saviour; for all the faithfulness of God, and all the power of God, and all the glory of God, and all the work of the great Mediator, go to make the eternity and the sufficiency of that great bulwark.

II. "Thou shalt call thy gates Praise." What is praise?

The joy of a happy spirit, pouring itself back into the bosom of God as its only fountain. Through the walls of salvation, the Christian enters into a perfect peace—that with a happy heart he may go out praisingly. In every object in nature, he likes to see some reflection of an unseen world; in every providence, he traces a Father's hand. He has thoughts high above, that make him walk this world an independent man. Heaven is gilding all the distance to him. He comes at last to Zion "with songs and everlasting joy upon his head."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 165.

Chap. lx., ver. 18.—"Thou shalt call thy gates Praise."

PRAISE is loftier than prayer. In prayer, I bow in my own family; in praise, I join the general assembly and Church of the first-born written in heaven. Prayer isolates me; by my wants and misery it sets me apart. Praise unites me; by my glory and my gratitude it makes me one with the universe of adoring creatures. Prayer is the wail of an imprisoned spirit; praise is the song of the emancipated spirit floating over and through and out of time and space Prayer speaks of its want; praise, of God's fulness. Prayer centres in self; praise anchors on God. "Thou shalt call her gates Praise;" these gates revolve on four hinges, or rather, to drop the mere allegory, praise is composed of four emotions. These are adoration, humility, affection, and gratitude,—all praise strikes these four notes, and includes these as its spiritual elements.

I. Praise is the gate by which we pass out of ourselves. What is religion without thankfulness? There are some persons to whom it seems impossible to take the wings of the morning; their religion seems at best to be a divine kind of grumbling, which would not be if they could but pass through the gates of praise.

II. It is by this path that the believer passes from his old state; it is through these gates that he passes under and into new relations. He enters the Church through the gates of praise. Gratitude is the very bond of our fellowship and union; it is when we speak of our gratitude that we know each other. The Church is a city built of hymns and hallelujahs; its walks are salvation.

III. The gateway by which we pass to higher knowledge and to higher life is praise. A grateful heart is a learned heart, and it is the companion of a thankful mind. The whole

universe is a cathedral of praise; its gates revolve on their hinges of melody; they heave and lift themselves with Æolian airs. This idea filled the mind of the Psalmist when he said, "All Thy works praise Thee." In all the wonderful adaptations of the mind to things, and things to the mind, God is praised.

E. Paxton Hood, *Sermons*, p. 153.

References: lx. 18.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, 1st series, p. 79; Bishop M. Simpson, *Sermons*, p. 279.

Chap. lx., ver. 19.—"The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory."

I. There is no better test of men's progress than the advancing power to do without the things which used to be essential to their lives. The lives of men who have been always growing are strewed along their whole course with things they have learned to do without. From the time when the child casts his leading strings aside, because his legs are strong enough to carry him alone, the growing man goes on for ever leaving each help for a higher, until at last, in that great change to which Isaiah's words seem to apply, he can do without sun and moon as he enters into the immediate presence and essential life of God. And if every progress in life is a change from some new boyhood to some yet riper manhood, if every man is a child to his own possible maturer self, may it not be truly stated that all the spiritual advances of life are advances from some symbol to its reality, and that the abandoned interests and occupations which strew the path which we have travelled are the symbols which we have cast away easily, because we had grasped the realities for which they stood?

II. You may ask (1) How can I tell the symbol from the reality, and so know what things it is good to hold less and less, what things it is good to hold more and more indispensable? The answer no doubt lies in a certain feeling of spirituality and infiniteness and eternity, which belongs to those things which it is good for a man not to be able to do without. (2) When I know what things I must not allow to become indispensable to me, what shall I do then? Shall I throw all those things away? No, certainly not. Not to give up the symbol, but to hold it as a symbol, with that looser grasp which lets its inner reality escape into us, and at the

same time makes us always ready to let it go when the reality shall have wholly opened from it, that is the true duty of the Christian as concerns the innocent things of the world. (3) How shall I come to count nothing indispensable but what I really ought to, what I really cannot do without? The answer to that question is in Christ, who holds the answers of all our questions for us Jesus lifted His disciples past one conception of necessity after another, until at last they knew nothing that was absolutely necessary except God. They began as fishermen, who could not do without their nets, and boats, and houses, and fishing friends, and sports, and gains, and gossipings. He carried them up till they were crying, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us."

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Sermons*, p. 282.

REFERENCES: lx. 19.—A. B. Bruce, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. x., p. 433; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 25. lx. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1176. lx. 22.—G. Cousins, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 9; J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 299.

Chap. lxi., ver. 1.—"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me," etc.

THE person of our blessed Lord is a type of the mystic personality of His Church. The notes by which He was manifested to the world as the true Messiah are notes by which also His Church is manifested to the world as the true Church. He was to be the true Healer and Comforter of all, bringing good tidings of good, binding up broken hearts, loosing prisoners out of bondage, comforting mourners, sympathising with all, drawing all that are afflicted to Himself, by the consciousness of their own miseries and by the attractions of His compassion. And this He did by His own Divine love, by His perfect human sympathy, by His own mysterious experience as the Man of Sorrows.

I. Such was His character and ministry; such is the character and ministry of His mystical body, the Church. The anointing which was upon Him flowed down from the Head to the members. So we find after His ascension. The Holy Ghost came upon the Apostles on the Day of Pentecost, and thence-forward they opened their work of compassion and of spiritual mercy by works of healing and by words of consolation. It was indeed the dispensation of the Comforter; the Church was the almoner of the poor, the physician of souls, the solace of the afflicted. It spoke peace, forgiveness, ransom, purity,

gladness of heart, to all. And after the descent of the Spirit, the Church passed into that truest discipline of sympathy, the experience of sorrow. Christians were sons of consolation, because they were men of sorrows. To the poor was given the first place in Christ's earthly kingdom; widows, orphans, mourners, were so many distinct orders whom the Church nourished and consoled; little children were among its chiefest cares. The whole visible system of hospitals, asylums, almshouses, and the like, are the expression and means of fulfilling the ends of mercy for which the Messiah was anointed by the Spirit of the Lord.

II. What has been said will show us the benefit of affliction to the Church. It is most certain that it was never so like its Divine Head as when it suffered for His name's sake. Whatsoever adversity be upon us, it is manifestly a token not only of God's love, but of God's purpose, to make us fitter for His work of mercy to the world.

III. Another thing we learn from what has been said is the design of God in afflicting the several members of the Church. It is to make them partakers of this true note of Christ's mystical body. We are all by nature hard and unsympathising. By our regeneration we learn to see the great truth of Christian compassion; but it lies dormant in us, until by the visitations of God's hand it is unfolded into contrition and spiritual sorrow. It is God's deepest way of teaching, and what we learn by affliction is our truest learning.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 200.

Chap. lxi., ver. 1.—"To proclaim liberty to the captives."

IT is a blessed name of Jesus, and as true as it is blessed—the Liberator. We can scarcely conceive anything grander, or more delightful, than to be always going about making everything free. To this end, Christ first liberated Himself.

1 As in Him there was no sin, He never indeed could know the worst of all bondage—the bondage of the spirit to the flesh. But He did know the restraints of fear; He did feel the harassing of indecision; He did experience the irksomeness of the sense of a body too narrow for the largeness of His soul; and He did go through the contractions of all that is material, and the mortifying conventionalities of life,—for He was hungry, thirsty, weary, sad, and the sport of fools. From all this Christ freed Himself—distinctly, progressively, He freed Himself. Step by step, He led captivity captive. He made for Himself a spiritual

body, which, in its own nature, and by the law of its being, soared at once beyond the trammels of its humanity. And therefore He is the Liberator, because He was once Himself the Prisoner.

II. And all Christ did, and all Christ was, upon this earth—His whole mission—was essentially either to teach or to give liberty. His preaching was, for the most part, to change the constraint of law into the largeness of love. Every word He said, in private or in public, proved expansion. He was always opening new fields of thought and being, bidding men go out into the breadth of the liberty of their sonship and their destiny and their immortality. His disciples were always looking down into the valleys and shut-up things: He led them to the high hills beyond. Men saw the shadows: He pointed to the sun travelling in its strength, without which those shadows could not be, and into which all those shadows were to be absorbed.

III. When Christ burst through all the tombs—the moral tombs and the physical tombs in which we all lay buried—and when He went out into life and glory; He was not Himself alone,—He was at that moment the covenanted Head of a mystical body, and all that body rose with Him. If so be you have union with Christ, you are risen; bondage is past; you are free.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, p. 274.

Chap. lxi., ver. 1.—"He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted."

I. THERE are two kinds of broken hearts: the natural and the spiritual. They may be united; and sometimes the heart is broken in nature, when it is very plain that it may be broken in grace. Often they are divided. Every broken heart becomes the subject of Jesus' care, and is dear to Him, if for no other reason in the world but for this—because it is unhappy.

II. Christ was Himself well trained in the school of suffering hearts, that He might learn to bind the mourners. All which goes to break men's hearts He felt. No wonder then that the bindings are what they are. (1) They are delicate. (2) They are very wise. (3) They are sure and thorough. There is no such thing as a half-cure in that treatment. No heart which has not known a breaking knows indeed what strength is.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, p. 269.

REFERENCES: lxi. 1.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, pp. 262, 282; A. F. Barfield, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 70; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1604; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 337; W. M. Punshon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 239.

Chap. lxi., vers. 1-3.

Observe the breadth and comprehensiveness of this great announcement. It includes all forms and classes of sorrow: "the poor"—the world's sad and uniform majority; "the brokenhearted"—all the children of sorrow; "the captives"—all upon whose soul ignorance or sin had bound fetters; "the blind"—all who were insensible to the light and joy with which Christ's mercy had filled the world. He came to teach all who needed teaching, to heal all who needed healing, to liberate all who were deprived of freedom. The misery that selfish men traded on, that sentimental pity turned away from because it could not bear to look upon it, His strong, healthy compassion went amongst; His hand was firm as His heart was tender. He had no professional narrowness that excluded the pariahs of life. He assumed no Pharisaic superiority. He seemed as if unconscious of Himself—a pure, ministering angel of God, bent only upon pitying and saving others. Let us distinctly note His principles and motives.

I. Can we suppose that His natural tastes and sympathies were not hurt by such association? He had no preference for squalor and poverty and misery for their own sakes. We may be sure that all the human sensibilities and refinements of our Lord would be jarred and pained by His contact with the poor, and yet we never hear of Him borrowing an excuse from His sensibilities.

II. Nor can we think of Him as insensible to the vices, the moral loathsomeness, of those to whom He ministered. His sinless sensitive soul came into direct contact with the world's reprobates, whose every word was a blasphemy and every act a sin. He subjected Himself to the unspeakable moral anguish of this: "endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself."

III. Nor did He throw the glamour of romance about the vices of the poor. He spake to them, and of them, with a calm, clear, righteous judgment, without favour and without partiality. They were not interesting because they were wicked. His pity was perfectly holy. Their misery touched not His sentimentalism, but His deep, strong, holy compassion.

IV. In proclaiming His mission to the poor, our Lord began at the root of the world's misery and sin. All the mightiest social influences come from beneath, upwards. If we would make the tree good, we must mend its root, not its upper branches. The religious system which is strong enough and

purifying enough to sanctify the poor will thereby most effectually influence the rich.

H. Allon, *Sermons at the Dedication of Union Chapel, Islington*, p. 175.

I. The text declares that the true ministry is always inspired and directed by the Holy Ghost. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me." The minister does not speak in his own name, or work in his own strength. A ministry without the Holy Ghost is a cloud without water; a Church without the Holy Ghost is a tree twice dead, that cannot too soon be plucked up by the roots. That our service may be animated by the Holy Spirit, and should express Divine ideas and purposes, is clear from the consideration that ours is not an earthly ministry contemplating earthly matters. When we are working not for this world only, but for worlds we have never seen, and which have been revealed to us by a Spirit which is not of this world, we have to be careful that we work not in our own strength or after our own imagination, but clearly, steadily, and constantly along the line of Divine inspiration.

II. The text shows us that the true ministry is animated by the sublimest benevolence. If you read the statement given by the prophet, you will find throughout the statement a tone of kindliness, benevolence, sympathy, gentleness, pity, for all human sorrow. Therein may be known the true ministry of the Gospel. Suspect every ministry that is gloomy. The keynote of the Gospel is joy; the watchword of the Gospel is liberty. Any ministry, public or private, that increases our gloom is a ministry that never came out of yonder central Light that is the light of the universe.

III. The text shows that the true ministry, whether public or private, never shrinks from its more awful functions. Observe this sentence in the midst of the declarations of the text: "To proclaim the day of vengeance of our God." There must yet be a day of vengeance in human history. Without a day of vengeance human history would not be merely poetically incomplete, but morally imperfect.

Parker, *City Temple*, 1870, p. 397.

References: lxi. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1369; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 44, and vol. ix., p. 50.

Chap. lxi., ver. 3.—"Trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord."

I. God's people are called "trees of righteousness" because

they are "the planting of the Lord." Godliness is not a thing which any craft of man can fashion. A man can no more make Himself godly than he can make a tree, or so much as the seed of a tree. If he becomes so, it must be the work of God. When God gave His word to man, He gave it to be full of seeds. If this seed be duly sown in the heart (it matters not by what means—let it only be sown), and if it neither be choked by thorns, nor burnt up by the heat, nor killed by the frost, the plant thus sown, if God watches over it and prospers it, will grow up to be a tree of righteousness.

II. Growth is a second point of likeness between trees and godliness, which makes it proper to call the righteous "trees of righteousness." Without the sun and air and rain, where would be the growth of the tree? Without the light and the purifying breath and dew of God's Spirit, where would be the growth of the Christian? It is God, and God alone, who giveth the growth and increase. What then is left for man to do toward working out his salvation? It is left for man (1) to pray; (2) to seek manure for the spiritual orchard in the constant study of God's word, and in diligent attendance on the ordinances of his Church.

III. A third likeness between the spiritual and the natural tree is that their growth is by degrees. A forest tree does not spring up in a day or a month or a year. Nor do the trees of righteousness; they too want time to grow. Plant your tree in good time, that you may be trees and not gourds.

IV. The next and perhaps the most remarkable point of likeness between the spiritual and vegetable life is the sap which flows through a healthy tree and makes it thrive and grow. "The trees of the Lord are full of sap." In other words, they are full of Christian feeling, which is the food and nourishment of Christian practice. You can no more have the fruits of holiness, without the life-blood of Christian love, than you can have a tree thriving and growing without sap.

V. The finest trees are rooted deep in earth, and point in their uprightness to heaven. So too must we have our root of faith strong in Christ; so our hearts must look, our minds must turn, our souls must rise, toward heaven.

A. W. HARE, *The Alton Sermons*, p. 258.

REFERENCES: **lxi. 3.**—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 1016; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 463; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 20, and vol. xiv., p. 15; W. H. Jackson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 346; Forsyth and Hamilton, *Pulpit Parables*, p. 1.

Chap. lxi., vers. 10, 11.—"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness," etc.

"THE robe of righteousness" is a familiar phrase with evangelical Christians. Adopted, undoubtedly, from the passage just read, it is used to denote that righteousness of the Lord Jesus which they who believe in Him are supposed to have attributed to them by God, so that their actual personal imperfections and defects disappear before Him, like some foul or ugly object beneath the overspreading of a fair white mantle; and He is enabled to accept them for what they are not—to regard and deal with them as sinless.

I. Now here is, first, an assumption—the false and cruel assumption—that the great Father, while waiting the gradual accomplishment of our complete purification from sin, requires to have our existing sinfulness hidden from Him, requires to have it veiled and concealed; that He must not be revolted nor disturbed by the spectacle; that we must be made somehow, nay anyhow, at least to look clean to Him, whatever our actual uncleanness may be; that He is not capable of enduring the sight of His children as they are, but needs that a mask shall be worn by them, to smile between Him and their unseemliness. Is it conceivable that God should ever be content to be blind to that which is, that He should ever endure to have any reality disguised to Him? *Can* aught be hidden from Him, the All-seeing One?

II. Turn now to the prophet, whose noble figure has been so miserably perverted, so falsely applied, and observe how different his idea of the robe of which he speaks. "The Lord hath covered me," he says, "as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels," which *seems* to imply certainly a putting on from without, and nothing more; yet, if we consider, the writer may well have discerned, in the lavish decoration of themselves on the part of the bridegroom and the bride, something more than that—not a mere imposition, but an expression, the natural expression, of what was within. But then, as if apprehensive of mistakes—as if anxious to guard against the conclusion that the robe of which he sang was only flung over him from without—the prophet hastens on to a further and more complete illustration (ver. 11), as though He had said: While in the self-adorning of the bridegroom and the bride on their wedding-day, I find an

image of the grace with which my Lord clothes me, and of the joy that belongs to it, yet this fails to represent the whole of the matter—fails, indeed, to represent the profoundest and most important part of it, viz., the *modus operandi*—the way in which my clothing is effected. *That* is adumbrated, in the world of material nature, in the vernal decking of the bare brown fields, and the winter-stripped pleasure grounds. What is it, and whence comes it? Is it not just a *growth from within*—an efflux upon the surface of life that throbs below—a bursting through and running over of the earth's own germ-charged bosom? And God's robe of righteousness is the forth-flowing upon me of His hidden movement and working in my soul—not a robe laid on, but a robe coming out—not a robe assumed, but a robe issuing; it is the holy character and the holy living that are begotten of His Divine inbreathing.

S. A. TIPPLE, *Echoes of Spoken Words*, p. 107.

REFERENCE: lxi. 10.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvi., p. 17.

Chap. lxi., ver. 11.—"For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations."

JUST as incredible as spring is to winter, as life is to death, is the summer splendour that shall one day mantle this sad world, this sad universe, to the darkness and drearihood of its present winter and night.

I. Consider the concords of the natural and the human worlds. The worlds are one; the Author is one; the life is one. Nature fits man as a dress the body. Man is the mould on which, as a garment, nature is fashioned. Isaiah had a keen eye for this unity. His prophecies are full of imaginative revelations of the likeness between the ways of God in nature and in man. The future of the world, of the universe, unfolded itself before him, as the outburst of a glorious spring—a spring which should know no autumn, a dawn that should never darken into night.

II. The winter of life and of the world. All that we look upon, all that strains our pity, oppresses our sympathy, saddens our heart and kills our hope, to the prophet's eye was but as the earth in winter—bare, bleak, stern, cold, dark, storm-beaten, frost-nipped, a wilderness of desolation, a waste of death. It is winter; and winter, let us understand, it will be yet. But in our dark despondent moods we entrench ourselves in the promise, "The Lord God shall cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations."

III. The certainty of a future everlasting spring. The law reigns throughout all the spheres, that light shall burst out of darkness, spring out of winter, life out of death. To an intelligent eye winter is not all desolation. There is a prophecy in every shrinking bud and blade. There is a living thing shining faintly under the pall. Those see it most whose hearts are most attuned to sympathy with the patience and the nope of God. There is more good in the worst heart than any of us dare credit. There is more seed springing under the hard dead crust of winter than any of us dare dream.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 111.

REFERENCE: lxi. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1104.

Chap. lxii., vers. 1-6.—"For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest. . . . I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace, day nor night," etc.

THE speaker of these words is the personal Messiah. Notice the remarkable parallelism in the expressions selected as the text: "I will not hold My peace;" the watchmen "shall never hold *their* peace." And His command to them is literally, "Ye that remind Jehovah—no *rest* (or silence) to you! and give not *rest* to Him." So that we have here Christ, the Church, and God all represented as unceasingly occupied in the one great work of establishing Zion as the centre of light, salvation, and righteousness for the whole world.

I. The glorified Christ is constantly working for His Church. Scripture sets forth the present glorious life of our ascended Lord under two contrasted and harmonious aspects—as being rest, and as being continuous activity in the midst of rest. Through all the ages His power is in exercise. We have not only to look back to the cross, but up to the throne. From the cross we hear a voice, "It is finished." From the throne a voice, "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest."

II. Christ's servants on earth derive from Him a like perpetual activity for the same object. The Lord associates Himself with watchmen, whom He appoints and endows for functions in some measure resembling His own, and exercised with constancy derived from Him. They are watchmen, and they are also God's remembrancers. In the one capacity, as in the other, their voices are to be always heard. The watchman's

office falls to be done by all who see the coming peril and have a tongue to echo it forth. The remembrancer's priestly office belongs to every member of Christ's priestly kingdom, the lowest and least of whom has the privilege of unrestrained entry into God's presence-chamber, and the power of blessing the world by faithful prayer. (1) Our voices should ever be heard on earth. (2) Our voices should ever be heard in heaven. (3) The power for both is derived from Christ.

III. The constant activity of the servants of Christ will secure the constant operation of God's power. Those who remind God are not to suffer Him to be still. The prophet believes that they can regulate the flow of Divine energy, can stir up the strength of the Lord. An awful responsibility lies on us. We can resist and oppose, or we can open our hearts and draw into ourselves His strength. We can bring into operation these energies which act through faithful men faithfully proclaiming the faithful saying; or we can limit the Holy One of Israel. On all sides motives for strenuous toil press in upon us. Look at the energy around, beneath, above us. When are we in all this magnificent concurrence of energy, for purposes which ought to be dear to our hearts, as they are to the heart of God?

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, 3rd series, p. 19.

REFERENCES: lxii. 1.—J. P. Gledstone, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 89; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 50. lxii. 1-7.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 56. lxii. 2.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. ix., p. 3. lxii. 5.—B. Waugh, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 118. lxii. 6, 7.—W. J. Mayers, *Ibid.*, vol. xvi., p. 276. lxii. 10.—*Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 97; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1131.

Chap. lxii., ver. 12.—"Thou shalt be called, Sought out."

ONE of the deadliest thoughts which can infect a human spirit is this—I am of no use, no worth, to earth or to heaven. And yet it is a natural thought, the natural utterance of our selfish, sensual lives. Who has not groaned out the confession of Asaph: "I was as a beast before Thee"? Man is profoundly conscious at once of sinfulness and impotence. The worst sin against heaven is despair. The idea the Lord hath need of thee is a very fundamental principle of the Gospel, the good news from God to man.

I. Is there not something radically false in this connection of need or want with the Divine name? The writers of the

Scripture see this difficulty plainly. They are full of sublime statements of the awfulness of the Divine supremacy. God absolute and infinite; the creature dependent and limited. But, on the other hand, they present and reiterate ideas as to the relation of the creature to the Creator, as to God's need of man in a very solemn sense, and man's need of God in every sense, which we are unable to square with any definition of the Divine attributes in which the intellect can find no flaw.

II. It is through Christ and Christ alone that we attain to the knowledge of the name and the mind of God. His love is essentially redeeming. It is a love which seeks and seeks to save. And this love which redeems has a great sorrow and want in the heart of it. It misses something which is infinitely dear to it, and it prepares to endure infinite toils and pains to recover that and to bring it home. The whole expression of the Incarnate One is a seeking, a longing, a loving.

III. It is impossible that God can seek us with more intense earnestness of purpose, or in more effectual modes, than those which are embodied in the mission of Christ to recover us to Himself. We may say reverently that the Father hath exhausted all the riches of His love in the gift of Christ to the world. J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 62.

REFERENCES: lxii. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 525; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 71.

Chap. lxiii., ver. 1.—"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?"

THE victory of Christ; the destruction of evil by good; the conquest over the devil by the Son of God, at cost, with pain, so that as He comes forth His robes are red with blood, the redemption of mankind from sin by the Divine and human Saviour,—this is the largest and completest meaning of the ancient vision. Wherever there is good at work in the world, we Christians may see the progress of the struggle, and rejoice already in the victory of Christ. It does us good. It enlarges and simplifies our thought of Christ's religion. We shall conquer. But when we say that, we are driven home to Him and Him alone, as our religion. Look at the method of His salvation, first, for the world at large, and then for the single soul.

I. "Who is this that cometh from Edom?" Sin hangs on the borders of goodness everywhere, as just across the narrow

Jordan valley Edom always lay threatening upon the skirts of Palestine. So right on the border of man's higher life lies the hostile Edom, watchful, indefatigable, inexorable, as the old foe of the Jews. Every morning we lift up our eyes, and there are the low black hill-tops across the narrow valley, with the black tents upon their sides, where Edom lies in wait. Who shall deliver us from the bad world and our bad selves? The Saviour comes out of the enemy's direction. His whole work had relation to and issues from the fact of sin. If there had been no sin, there would have been no Saviour.

II. Look next what He says to His anxious questioner. (1) We ask Him, "Who is this?" and He replies, "I that come in righteousness, mighty to save." The Saviour comes in the strength of righteousness. He will be the negotiator of no low compromise. He wants to set up the standard of absolute holiness in the midst of a nature all conquered and totally possessed by Him. (2) It is no holiday monarch coming with a bloodless triumph. The power of God has struggled with the enemy, and subdued him only in the agony of strife. Only in self-sacrifice and suffering could even God conquer sin. (3) He has conquered *alone*. He had fellow-workers, but they only handed round the broken bread and fishes in the miracle, or ordered the guest-chamber on the Passover night. They never came into the deepest work of His life. With the mysterious suffering that saved the world they had nothing to do. (4) What was the fruit of this victory over Edom which the seer of Israel discovered from his mountain-top? It set Israel free from continual harassing and fear, and gave her a chance to develop along the way that God had marked out for her. Christ's salvation sets men free; it takes off the load of sin; it gives us a new chance; and says to the poor soul that has been thinking there was no use of trying to stagger on with such a load, Go on; your burden is removed. Go on; go up to the home that you were made for, and the life in God.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Sermons*, p. 37.

REFERENCES: lxiii. 1.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 150; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 292; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 3; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 14; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 129.

Chap. lxiii., ver. 3.—"I have trodden the winepress alone."

CONSIDER one or two circumstances which rendered Jesus solitary in His sufferings.

I. One of the most obvious of these is, that all His sorrowings and sufferings were, long ere their actual occurrence, clearly and fully foreseen. They were anticipated sorrows. The ignorance of futurity, which mercifully tempers the severity of all human ills, was an alleviation of sorrow unknown to Jesus. Even the smiles of infancy, may we not almost say, were darkened by the anticipated anguish of death, and in the very slumbers of the cradle, He already in fancy hung upon the cross. From the very dawn of his earthly ministry, Jesus looked forward to its dreadful close.

II. Another circumstance which distinguishes the sorrows of Jesus from those of all ordinary men, and which gives to this greatest of sufferers an aspect of solitariness in their endurance, is this--that they were the sorrows of an infinitely pure and perfect mind. No ordinary human being could ever suffer as Jesus did, for His soul was greater than all other souls; and the mind that is of largest compass, or that is cast in the finest mould, is ever the most susceptible of suffering. A little, narrow, selfish, uncultured mind is liable to comparatively few troubles. The range alike of its joys and sorrows is limited and contracted. It presents but a narrow target to the arrows of misfortune, and it escapes uninjured where a broader spirit would be "pierced through with many sorrows."

III. But the feelings of Jesus in contemplating the sin and wretchedness of humanity, the mournful prevalence of evil in the world, were not those merely of a most holy and tender-hearted human being. His sorrow was the sorrow of a Creator amid His ruined works. (1) Such views of the sufferings of Jesus are suggestive of gratitude for His marvellous self-devotion on our behalf. (2) The subject is fraught with a most solemn warning to all who are living in carelessness or indifference to the spiritual interests of themselves and others. (3) Such views of the sufferings of Jesus afford to every penitent soul the strongest encouragement to rely on the Saviour's love. J. CAIRD, *Sermons*, p. 134.

THERE is a loneliness in death for all men. There is a mysterious something which makes the bystanders feel that before the last breath the embarkation has begun. There is a silence of the soul to earth and earth's thoughts which seems to enter its protest alike against sobs and words—seems to bespeak the forbearance of the surviving towards the solemn, the mysterious act of stepping across the threshold of sense,

into the very presence of the invisible God. There was this loneliness then, as of course, in the death of our Lord. In Him it was deepened and aggravated by the foregoing loneliness of His life. But we have not reached *the* loneliness yet. The context will give us one clue.

I. "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me." There could not be. "I looked, and there was none to help." If there had been, this particular death had not been died. Christ was doing something in which He could have no assistance. His was a death not with sinners, but for sin; a death, therefore, which none else could die, in that which made it what it was in its truth and in its essence.

II. The divinity, the deity of Christ was another cause of the loneliness. Deity is loneliness, not in heaven, but on earth. If Christ was very God, He must live alone and He must die alone upon earth. It accounts for everything. His Divine Spirit, His soul indwelt of the Holy Ghost, must have been a solitude.

III. Loneliness often is isolation. Lonely men and women —lonely by circumstance or by disposition or by choice—are commonly selfish. Neither atonement nor deity made a solitary, in this sense, of Jesus Christ. He died that we might never be lonely—no, not in death. Though He trod the winepress alone, yet He was not alone in this sense. He trod it for us. The loneliness was His; the sympathy is ours. The cross was His desolation: it is our comfort; it is our ornament; it is our "joy and hope and crown of rejoicing."

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Temple Sermons*, p. 176.

LONELINESS has many senses, inward and outward.

I. There is first the loneliness of simple solitude. Solitude which is, first, voluntary, and, secondly, occasional, is but half solitude. Solitude which we fly to as a rest, and can exchange at will for society which we love, is a widely different thing from that solitude which is either the consequence of bereavement or the punishment of crime—that solitude from which we cannot escape, and which is perhaps associated with bitter, remorseful recollections. Solitude reveals to us, as in a moment, what manner of spirit we are of; whether we have any root, any vitality in ourselves, or are only the creatures of society and of circumstance, found out and convicted by the application of the individual touchstone.

II. Again, there is the loneliness of sorrow. Is not loneliness the prominent feeling in all deep sorrow? Is it not this which deprives all after-joy of its chief zest, and reduces life itself to a colourless and level landscape?

III. Again, there is the loneliness of a sense of sin. Whatever duties may lie upon us towards other men, in our innermost relations to God we are and must be alone Repentance is loneliness; remorse is desolation. Repentance makes us lonely towards man; remorse makes us desolate towards God.

IV. There is the loneliness of death. We all speak of death familiarly, as if we knew what it was, as if we had taken its measure and weighed its import. But who amongst the living can tell us what it is? In death we shall be alone, and shall feel ourselves to be so.

V. In the judgment we shall be alone. Every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

VI. There are two senses in which we ought all to practise being alone. (1) One of these is being alone in prayer. (2) If we are to die alone and be judged alone, do not let us be afraid to think alone, and, if necessary, to act alone.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, p. 197.

Chap. lxiii., ver. 3.—"I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with Me; for I will tread them in Mine anger, and trample them in My fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon My garments, and I will stain all My raiment."

I. CONSIDER what Scripture reveals to us in regard to Christ's second advent. There is a time appointed in the history of our world, when that very Jesus who appeared on earth, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," shall reappear with all the circumstances of majesty and power, "King of kings and Lord of lords." We are led to expect a day when Christ shall find a home in the remotest hearts and families, and the earth in all its circumference be covered with the knowledge and the power of the Lord. In effecting this sublime revolution, we are taught that the Jews shall be God's mightiest instruments. But it shall not be without opposition, nor without convulsion, that Satan is driven from his usurped dominion. Previously to this great consummation, and in order to the production of this, is to be what Scripture calls the second advent of Christ; and the judgments with which this second coming shall be attended and followed constitute that tremendous visitation which prophecy

associates with the last times, and delineates under every figure of woe, of terror, and of wrath.

II. The Redeemer, as exhibited in our text, is returning from the slaughter of His enemies, and He describes Himself as "speaking in righteousness, mighty to save." His actions have just proved Him mighty to destroy, and His words now announce Him mighty to save; so that He is able to confound every foe and uphold every friend. The two grand principles which we expect to see maintained in every righteous government are that none of the guilty shall escape, and that none of the innocent shall perish. And in the reply given to the challenge of the prophet there is a distinct assertion that He who comes with the dyed garments from Bozrah maintains these principles of government, which cannot be maintained but by an Infinite Judge. This agrees admirably with Christ's second advent; for that is the only season at which men living on the earth shall be accurately divided into the evil and the good—into those who are to be consumed, and those who are to be untouched by the visitations of wrath.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1817.

REFERENCES: lxiii. 3.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 92. lxiii. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1126; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 25; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 144. lxiii. 7-10.—*Ibid.*, vol. xvi., p. 141.

Chap. lxiii., ver. 9.—**"In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them."**

THESE words occur in the course of a most affecting and pathetic prayer which the prophet utters. In the course of his prayer he recalls the wonderful love of Jehovah for His people during their early afflictions,—His patience with their waywardness, and His surpassing gentleness and care while on their way to Palestine. He is the same mighty Helper as of old, and His mercy is not restrained. It is an argument from God's own past, an argument which never fails to sustain His suffering saints, and it is no less cheering to us than to the captive Jews; nay, more so, all the records of His dealings with His ancient people are still witnesses to us, and from them we can gather with what manner of Saviour we have to do. The mediatorial office of Christ did not begin in the manger. It travels back to the door of history before the birth of human souls. It is one Person all along the line, and one character of patient loving-kindness and mercy which is revealed to us in both Testaments.

I. Was there not to be between the Son of God and the sons of men some close relationship, which should exist from the very first? Man was made in the image of God; but already there existed an eternal, uncreated image and only begotten Son, in whose likeness ours found reflection. Between that adorable and everlasting Son of God in heaven, and the new-made son of God on earth, there might be some tie of sympathy and condescension on the part of the great Son, and aspiration and trust on the part of the little son.

II. The Son is the face of God through whom God is visible. Of all creatures He is the immediate Head. It follows that whatever of a gracious nature might pass between new-made man and his Maker, must have passed through the Son of God. His was the nature that touched man's spirit. He it was whom the first man heard walking amid primeval woods.

III. Nor is this relationship of God to man upset by man's fall; on the contrary, it grew closer still. What strange meaning does it not shadow back through every page of man's long troubled history, to know that while these countless generations passed along, their condescending Lord, with His mighty hands, touched all life, and said that their sorrow touched His mighty heart, who was one day to be amongst them a simple Child. Scarcely has God made a new covenant than Jehovah, in the guise of man, is found in Abraham's tent, and the Judge of all the earth was there. From that day we grow familiar, as we read, with a form which seems, as it were, to haunt the world, and a form like unto the Son of man—a form which comes and goes in fitful glimpses, speaks in Jehovah's name, expects the worship due to the Most High, and yet calls himself the angel of the presence of God. The Messiah, the Messenger, the Angel of the Lord spoken of in the Old Testament, was none other than the Eternal Son, who Himself was keeping up a personal intercourse with humanity, never losing touch of that race of which He was to become the Saviour, and who directed the closer revelation which enlightens all prophecy, and which was irradiated by the wonders of the Cross.

IV. There is instruction to be gleaned from this revelation of Divine love. (1) Such as the Son of God proved Himself to be to Abraham, Moses, and David, such He will prove Himself under His new revealed name of Jesus to those who trust Him. If we serve Him He will bear us and carry us, as He did His people in the days of old. (2) Does not the view of the Old

Testament which we have been recording relieve the great fact of the Incarnation from being an isolated event? The Eternal Son had been resident among men from the beginning, had seen His glory reflected in His people, dimmed by human sin before He was born at Bethlehem. He was afflicted in their afflictions, and was the life of their life, before He assumed their form.

J. Oswald Dykes, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 111.

References: lxiii. 9.—Forsyth and Hamilton, *Pulpit Parables*, p. 126; T. B. Dover, *A Lent Manual*, p. 23; R. Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 49.

Chap. lxiii., ver. 10.—"But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them."

Note:—

I. Some of the ways in which men may be said to vex the Holy Spirit. (1) This sin is committed, when the all-important office executed by the Spirit in the Church, as sent by Christ to quicken, convert, and sanctify the soul, is not duly recognised and honoured. (2) The sin of vexing the Spirit is committed, when the means and instruments by which He carries on His work are despised or abused. (3) The sin of vexing the Spirit is committed by the unwarrantable doubts and fears which sometimes depress the minds of the people of God. (4) The sin of vexing the Holy Spirit is committed, when any good motions or purposes which He excites in the heart are suppressed, or not followed out. (5) The sin of vexing the Holy Spirit is committed when the grace and energy which He imparts are not actively and faithfully exercised.

II. Consider the dangerous consequences of vexing the Holy Spirit. (1) One result of the Spirit's "turning against" any one would be His withdrawing altogether the instruments, and means, and opportunities of grace which men have despised or abused; and as they sought not to arrive at the knowledge of the truth, leaving them to perish in the darkness which they have loved. (2) Another thing obviously implied in the Spirit's turning against any one, is His ceasing to work, and to make the means of grace effectual for conviction and conversion.

A. D. Davidson, *Lectures and Sermons*, p. 211.

Chap. lxiii., ver. 16.—"Doubtless Thou art our Father."

I. These words express a deep longing of the human heart. With all its folly, and frivolity, and sin, the heart of man has been made to feel after these words: "Our Father—our Father

which art in heaven." When we look at the length and breadth of man's history, it tells us that this cry constantly returns, sometimes exceeding great and bitter, sometimes sinking to a low moan or a suppressed whisper. "O that I knew where I might find Him."

II. And yet it is often difficult to speak these words with full assurance. The struggle to reach them is evident in the men who use them here, and is felt in the very word "doubtless" with which they begin their claim. The mind, the heart, the conscience, all find difficulties.

III. But, with all these difficulties, it is a feeling which can be, and has been, reached. We could never believe that such a deep longing had been implanted in man, to be for ever unanswered—a cry pressed from his heart to be mocked with endless disappointment. In view of all the difficulties of mind, and heart, and conscience, there have been men who could look up and say, "Doubtless Thou art our Father."

IV. But this full sense of God's Fatherhood is not generally gained at once. There are three chambers by which we advance to the assurance of Fatherhood in God. The first is the upper chamber of Jerusalem, which comes to us ever and again in the Lord's table, with its offer of pardon and peace. The second is the chamber of the heart, to which we give him admission in love and obedience. The third is the home, where the Holy Spirit teaches us to cry, "Abba, Father."

V. To use these words truly is a matter of infinite moment to us all. J. KER, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 170.

REFERENCE: lxiii. 16.—*Old Testament Outlines*, p. 240.

Chap. lxiv., vers. 1, 2.—"Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence," etc.

I. THIS is nothing less than a prayer that God would manifest Himself as a Judge—yes, and as a Destroyer. Isaiah craved for a man who should deliver men from the oppressions of the world's tyranny, from the storms which are raised by the passions of peoples and rulers, from the weariness and exhaustion which follow when they have accomplished their projects with great labour, and nothing comes out of them. All the misery which they cause springs, so the prophet thinks, from their assuming to be gods themselves, and from the disbelief which they cherish, and which they generate in a God who is altogether unlike them, whose ways are not their ways, whose purposes

are not their purposes. And what he longed for was that the true man should appear, who would thoroughly manifest the ways and purposes of the true God, who would remove the thick veil which had intercepted His light from reaching His creatures, who would make them know that He was present with them, that He was ruling them and judging them. To long then for a man who should be a hiding-place from the tempest and a covert from the storm or heat, was the very same thing as to long that God would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would flow down at His presence.

II. There is a natural heart in all of us which is averse from this prayer, which would rather utter any prayer than this. And there is a natural religion which adapts itself to these cravings of ours, and supplies them with a language. To keep God at a distance from men is the end which it proposes to itself; to convert all persons who perform its offices, all prayers and dogmas, into barriers more or less secure against His appearing, and His vengeance, is its art. This religion expresses all *different* feelings of men, in different conditions of disease. It does not express the one *common* feeling of men, to be raised out of their diseases, to be made whole. It has no language for the infinite craving after God, the intense longing to be brought face to face with Him—to encounter all His vengeance rather than be separated from Him—which dwells in every man. The universal prayer—the prayer that goes up from the whole heart of humanity—is this of Isaiah's.

III. The prophet had been disciplined to understand that man does not require to be protected against God, but that God should protect him against himself, and should raise him out of the slavery which he invents for himself. Thus did he learn to rejoice, even while he trembled, at the convulsions in the outward world, or in human society. Thus did he understand that by all such signs God was avenging the cause of the poor, of those who had no helper, was shaking kings on their thrones, was surprising the hypocrites. Thus was Isaiah made into the evangelical prophet, the witness that unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, who can be a covert from the tempest, because He is both the Son of man and the Son of God; because God appearing in Him does indeed rend the heavens and come down.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 179.

REFERENCES: lxiv. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1538; lxiv. 4.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2466.; J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, Part I., p. 212.

Chap. lxiv., ver. 6.—"We all do fade as a leaf."

I. NOTICE, first, the very pernicious fact of our inaptitude to feel r mortal condition is fading. (1) We are very e the common lot and destiny of all human fade and is fading. The vast world of the our sight—even what was the material and at is constantly in our sight is the world of are unapt to think of them as all appointed And we may note a circumstance which aids ely, that the most decayed and faded portion d is much less in sight than the fresh and sight, out of mind" in a great degree. (2) We forget our own destiny, even while we do al appointment to fade and vanish. We have e power and instinct to dissociate ourselves idition and relationship of humanity. (3) We e much more as a thing that we positively thing that we are losing, and in a train to

of those monitory circumstances which verify ate. (1) How many successive generations id vanished since the text itself was written? mind, the constant, inevitable progress to- fading would appear very much related to it. One has looked sometimes on the flowers of a meadow which the mower's scythe was to invade next day:—perfect life and beauty as yet,—but to the mind they have seemed already fading through the anticipation. (3) But there are still more decided indications of decay. There are circumstances that will not let us forget *where-abouts* we are in life; feelings of positive infirmity, diminished power of exertion, grey hairs, failure of sight, slight injuries to the body far less easily repaired. Let us not absurdly turn from this view of life because it is grave and gloomy, but dwell upon it, often and intensely, for the great purpose of exciting our spirits to a victory over the vanity of our present condition; to gain from it, through the aid of the Divine Spirit, a mighty impulse toward a state of ever-living, ever-blooming existence beyond the sky. J. FOSTER, *Lectures*, 1st series, p. 245.

I. ISAIAH forms a most correct estimate of our condition upon earth, because we are all frail like the leaf.

II. The prophet's reminder marks the certainty of our approaching death.

III. The metaphor reminds us of the uncertainty of the time when death may come.

IV. The lesson of our *gradual* decay is set forth in the falling leaf.

V. The text suggests the renovation which will follow our decay.

W. N. NORTON, *Every Sunday*, p. 447.

REFERENCES: lxiv. 6.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 303; S. Randall, *Literary Churchman Sermons*, p. 236; *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. ii., p. 454; *Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 102; A. F. Barfield, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 150; F. Wagstaff, *Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 232; E. D. Solomon, *Ibid.*, vol. xxiv., p. 296. lxiv. 6-8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 437. lxiv. 7.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 229; J. F. Haynes, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 314; J. P. Gledstone, *Ibid.*, vol. xvii., p. 89; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 204; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1377.

Chap. lxiv., ver. 8.—"But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and Thou our Potter."

I. How does the Potter use and convert the clay? (1) It is clear that the clay must be purified. The blood of Jesus Christ passes over it, mingles with it, and it is pure. (2) And so God proceeds to shape and remake it. We are all of the same clay, and we are all made for one purpose, though in different ways and various degrees,—to glorify God: first, to hold His love, and then to communicate that love to others. (3) And then, thirdly, God stamps His own work with His own signet and His own image; it carries its own evidence in it that it is His. To every man's own heart it carries it by a secret witness. To the world and to the Church it carries it, by a mark which characterises it,—a meekness, a love, a holiness, a humility, which cannot be mistaken.

II. In order that God may fashion us, it is plain that our self-renunciation must be complete and our faith must be clear. We must accept our own utter wretched nothingness, and we must have a distinct expectation that God can and will make us all our fondest hope ever grasped, or all our utmost imagination ever painted.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 8th series, p. 152.

Chap. lxiv., ver. 8.—"O Lord, Thou art our Father." Chap. xxxiii., ver. 22.—"The Lord is our King."

GOD is related to each of us both as a Father and a King. The idea of a Father contains more prominently the sentiment of

bountiful and tender cherishing, while that of a King contains more prominently that of regulation and control; and it is not till we have combined them that we can form an adequate conception of the relation in which He stands to us.

I. We should give the idea of God's Fatherhood the first place in our meditations on His character, and not only begin with it, but carry it as the master-thought athwart all our other contemplations of Him, qualifying them with its influence. (1) Even a heathen could say, as an apostle has approvingly told us, "We are also His offspring." How much more is it not incumbent that *we* make the acknowledgment with filial and confiding hearts—we who enjoy that clear revelation that God created man in His own image? What else does this import than that, above all His other works, He distinguished man by producing him as a son, with a nature resembling His own? Accordingly, He endowed him with a son's prerogative—the dominion over all His inferior creation. (2) If God is our Father, we should have confidence in His loving-kindness.

II. Besides being a Father, God is a King. An earthly father's administration of his family is a matter of privacy. Public interests are not concerned in it, and he may do with his own what pleases his humour. He may open his door and re-admit the prodigal, even without any repentance and confession, if he choose. But God's family being the public—the universal public of created moral intelligence,—though this does not affect the personal love of the administrator, yet does it materially affect the mode of the administration. The family of children has enlarged into a kingdom of subjects. The order of all good government of a kingdom is, that the violation of the laws shall be visited with penal suffering before there be a restoration to the privileges of citizenship. Shall the fatherly love of God, then, resign His rebel child as lost? Behold the mystery of our redemption. The paternity of God secures that His regal justice will accept of an adequate ransom, if such should be offered. The proclamation of the gospel is not so much the proclamation of a King, declaring that no man shall be saved except through faith in Christ's sacrifice, as it is the earnest entreaty of a Father that His children should believe, so as to be saved.

W. ANDERSON, *Discourses*, 2nd series, p. 1.

REFERENCES: lxiv.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, 1st series, p. 118. lxv. 1. —Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1919; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 53.

Chap. lxv., ver. 5.—"Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou."

FALSE grounds of superiority in holiness. The disposition to arrogate the dignity of holiness,—in other words, of religious worth and excellence,—has never become extinct among men, nor the quite consistent disposition to turn it to the use of pride. We may specify a few of the many grounds of pretension on which this assumption of holiness sustains itself, and takes authority for its pride of comparison with other men.

I. In some instances an assumption of superior holiness has been made upon the ground of belonging to a certain division or class of mankind, a class having its distinction in the circumstances of descent and nativity, or in some artificial constitution of society.

II. Again, in many periods and places men have reputed themselves holy on the ground of a punctilious observance of religious forms and ceremonies, whether of Divine appointment or human invention.

III. Another ground of such assumption and pride as the text expresses, is general rectitude of practical conduct, separate from the true religious principle of moral excellence.

IV. The pride of self-estimation for goodness or holiness is apt to be betrayed by persons who have preserved a character substantially free from reproach, against those who have, in some known instance, fallen into great sin.

V. There is such a thing as a factitious zeal in the active service of religion, and that forms a ground of high pretension.

VI. There are a number of persons among professing Christians whose minds are almost ever dwelling on certain high points of doctrine, sought chiefly in the book of God's eternal decrees. And it is on these doctrines that they found, in some manner, an absolute assurance of their being in Christ, in the Divine favour, children of God, and therefore as sure of heaven as if they were there. They can look with pride, not with pious gratitude, on those who are suffering doubts and solicitude respecting their state toward God and a future world.

VII. We may name, lastly, as one of the things made a ground of pretension and pride,—the experience of elated, ardent, enthusiastic feelings in some semblance of connection with religion, but not really of its genuine inspiration.

J. FOSTER, *Lectures*, 1st series, p. 180.

REFERENCE: lxv. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1497.

Chap. lxv., ver. 8.—"Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it."

HERE we have four lessons taught us by a bunch of grapes.

I. That great good may be stored in little things. A bunch of grapes is a little thing, and yet there is a blessing in it. With a heart given to Jesus, a child is a sun which cannot but shine, a fountain which cannot but send out streams, a flower which cannot but fill the air with sweetness.

II. God alone puts the blessing into little things. In this He displays: (1) His wisdom; (2) His omnipotence; (3) His condescension and compassion.

III. Little things are to be spared for this blessing in them. There are plenty of little things which you are apt to despise because they are little, and yet, destroy them not, says God, for a blessing is in them. (1) Your vows and resolutions; (2) your principles; (3) your habits; (4) your character; (5) your friendships; (6) your interest in the heathen.

IV. If the blessing is lacking in them they will be undone for ever. "Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it." As if it were said, If there were no blessing in it, then it might be destroyed. It is the blessing which delivers. If there is no blessing in us, we are doomed. The unprofitable servant hid his talent in the napkin, but he could not hide himself from his master's indignation.

J. BOLTON, *Family Treasury*, Jan. 1863, p. 111.

REFERENCES: lxv. 8.—*Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 104. lxv. 11.—F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 321. lxv. 19.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 236. lxv. 20.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 341.

Chap. lxv., ver. 24.—"Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

I. CONSIDER how great degrees of love and anxiety for us are expressed in these few words. The Almighty Lord of heaven and earth represents Himself as watching with anxiety the hearts and consciences of us His creatures, His sinful creatures; as listening after any, the least, expression of penitence, so it be sincere; as having joy in any expressions of returning love in the cold and hardened heart. When we reflect on this, when we consider what forbearance and parental anxiety the great God of heaven shows for us, our hearts must indeed be hardened, our natural affections deadened by long intercourse with a cruel, deceitful world, if we feel not at least some desire to be worthy to be called the sons of so kind, so tender, so good a Father.

II. The question, then, which it concerns us to put impartially to our consciences is, Whether we do habitually endeavour to pray? Whether, in the midst of the daily cares and business of life, our minds habitually ascend to our God and Saviour, and with Him continually dwell; whether our desires, hopes, and wishes are in the right direction, namely, towards God and heaven and heavenly things; whether we habitually express these our feelings and affection in such ways as our heavenly Father has directed and sanctioned, namely, by the practice of deliberate, earnest, importunate prayer.

III. If we will not look to God as our Father, what other hope or dependence can we be trusting to? Our having a good character in the world for morality or religion will avail us nothing; our thinking favourably of ourselves will avail us nothing; our occasional regard to good forms, or occasional indulgence of seeming religious feelings, will avail us nothing. If we do not love and adore and devote ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, we are surely not in the safe way to salvation; and without leading a life of prayer, how can we flatter ourselves that we love our God?

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. x., p. 208.

REFERENCES: lxv. 24.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 34. lxvi. 1, 2.—E. Roberts, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3504; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1083. lxvi. 5.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ix., p. 53; J. B. Heard, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 225. lxvi. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 1009.

Chap. lxvi., ver. 12.—"Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river."

THE peace of God's Church resembles a river.

1. In its source. The source or spring of a river is hidden. It wells up from the fountains of the great deep beneath the earth. Many see the river in its course, and witness the fertility with which its progress is attended, whose footsteps never approached its source, nor indeed could do so. The source of peace to God's children is God Himself. The peace of God is a well of water springing up in the depths of the spirit. And accordingly men can see that peace only in its effects and results.

II. In the method of its nourishment. It is true that rivers are fed perpetually by their springs. But an external nourishment is also supplied to them by occasional rains and landfloods, which swell the rivers and cause them to rise, and even to

overflow their channels. The river of the Christian's peace is augmented by contrition. The tears and sighs of godly sorrow are essential to the fulness of that peace. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

III. In its course. (1) A river in its course is quietly progressive. The Christian's peace is a peace of progress in grace. (2) A river is exceeding deep. And the peace of God is said to "pass all understanding." The nature and character of that peace is unintelligible to those who have *not* tasted it, and by those who have tasted it its depth is unfathomable. (3) A river in its course is fertilising and enriching. The peace of God is at the root of all holy fruitfulness. (4) A river in its course is clean and cleansing. The peace of God's Church is a clean and holy (because a living) peace—clear as crystal, and perfectly alien from all defilement. (5) A river bears burdens. It is one of the most delightful characteristics of the Christian's peace that its buoyancy supports many and grievous burdens.

IV. At its mouth. A river expands at its mouth. For the last few miles of its progress the distance between its banks becomes wider, till at length it pours itself with a full flood into the ocean. The peace of the true believer is enlarged as he draws near to the heavenly goal, and accordingly the country of his soul is more abundantly fertilised.

E. M. GOULBURN, *Sermons in the Parish Church of Holywell*, p. 229.

Chap. lxvi., ver. 13.—"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you."

I. GOD comforts like the *ideal* mother. The only perfect mother is in the mind and heart of God. And He comforts as that image might be expected to comfort and would be capable of comforting.

II. God comforts as the mothers comforted of whom the prophet spoke. No mother is perfect, but every true and good mother is a great consoler. (1) God comforts naturally; (2) He comforts personally; (3) He comforts lovingly; (4) He comforts practically; (5) He comforts broadly; (6) He comforts constantly; (7) He comforts effectually.

S. MARTIN, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: lxvi. 13.—J. T. Stannard, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 252. lxvi. 19.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 272. lxvi. 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 992; J. Keble, *Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 332.

JEREMIAH.

Chap. i., vers. 1-13.—"The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests that were in Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin," etc.

I.—(ver. 4). THE two great blessings of *election* and *mediation* are here distinctly taught. God did not speak to the nations directly, but mediationally. He created a minister who should be His mouthpiece. Observation itself teaches us that men are called and chosen of God to do special work in all departments of life. The difficult lesson for some of us to learn is, that we are called to *obscurity*; and yet this is as clearly a Divine appointment as is the choice of an Isaiah or a Jeremiah.

II.—(vers. 6-8). It is thus that fear and confidence make up our best life. We are sure that God has called us, yet we dread to set down our feet on the way which He has marked out with all the clearness of light. Fear well becomes our mortality, for what is our strength? and as for our days, their number is small. Beautiful is modesty in its own place, but never forget that there is something which closely imitates its loveliest features, and that its foul name is hypocrisy.

III.—(vers. 9, 10). You made much of your own weakness; now what are you going to make of God's strength. You may obstinately persist in looking at your own small arm, or you may piously turn to the almightiness of God, and draw your power from eternity; and upon your choice will depend your whole after-life. (1) Observe the expression, "I will put My words in thy mouth." The minister of God is to speak the words of God. (2) The tenth verse sets forth, under a personal figure, the majesty and omnipotence of truth. It is not the mere man Jeremiah who is thus mighty, even to terribleness; he is but representative and ministerial, and if he tamper with his mission he will be dispossessed and humbled.

IV.—(vers. 11-13). The power of spiritual vision is pre-eminently the gift of God. The power of parables, making them or reading them, is a deep mystery of the unseen

Kingdom. It is the gift of sight which distinguishes one man from another.

PARKER, *The Ark of God*, p. 170.

REFERENCES: i. 5.—C. J. Vaughan, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 243. i. 6.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 80.

Chap. i., vers. 6-9.

IT is not improbable that Jeremiah was almost a child when he spoke these words. Considering the time to which he lived, he must have been young in the thirteenth year of Josiah,—young enough to make the most literal sense of the expression in the text a reasonable one. Jeremiah has a kind of feminine tenderness and susceptibility; strength was to be educed out of a spirit which was inclined to be timid and shrinking. Think of such a vision as being presented to a mind cast in that mould: "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant."

I. The discoveries and revelations to the minds of the prophets became deeper in proportion as they approached nearer to some great crisis in their country's history. It was possible for the Israelite of an earlier time to think of the covenant which God had made with His people as an act of grace expressing, no doubt, the mind of a gracious Being, but still almost arbitrary. Isaiah was gradually educated to know that the covenant denoted a real and eternal relation between God and man in the person of a Mediator. If that truth is not brought out with the same force and distinctness in Jeremiah, if he is not in the same sense as the other the evangelical prophet, yet he had even a deeper conviction that a Divine Spirit was with him continually, a Spirit which was seeking to subdue his will—all wills—to Itself. That men should break loose from this gracious government, should choose to be independent of it, seemed to him the saddest and strangest thing in the world.

II. The greatest cause of dismay to Jeremiah was the falsehood of the priests and prophets. No doubt the official or personal self-conceit of the priests, which arose from their forgetfulness of their relation to the people at large, was one of their greatest offences in his eyes. But these sins arose from their not confessing that they were called by the Lord to be witnesses of His sympathy: whenever they were not witnesses for Him, they were necessarily proud and self-seeking. Jeremiah could only be qualified for his work by feeling in himself

every one of the evil tendencies which he imputed to the priests generally. He had to feel all the peculiar temptations of his tribe and class to vanity, self-glorification, self-indulgence,—to feel how quickly they might fall into all the commonest, grossest habits of other men; while there is also a subtle, radical, internal wickedness that is nearer to them than to those whose offerings they present.

F. D. MAURICE, *Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament*, p. 378.

REFERENCE: i. 7-10.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 195.

Chap. i., ver. 8.—"Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord."

THE prophets were ever ungratefully treated by the Israelites; they were resisted, their warnings neglected, their good services forgotten. But there was this difference between the earlier and the later prophets: the earlier lived and died in honour among their people,—in outward honour; though hated and thwarted by the wicked, they were exalted to high places, and ruled in the congregation. But in the later times, the prophets were not only feared and hated by the enemies of God, but cast out of the vineyard. As the time approached for the coming of the true Prophet of the Church, the Son of God, they resembled Him in their earthly fortunes more and more, and as He was to suffer, so did they. Moses was a ruler, Jeremiah was an outcast; Samuel was buried in peace, John the Baptist was beheaded.

I. Of all the persecuted prophets, Jeremiah is the most eminent, *i.e.* we know more of his history, of his imprisonments, his wanderings, and his afflictions. He comes next to David—I do not say in dignity and privilege, for it was Elijah who was taken up to heaven and appeared at the Transfiguration; nor to inspiration, for to Isaiah one should assign the higher evangelical gifts; but in typifying Him who came and wept over Jerusalem, and there was tortured and put to death by those He wept over.

II. Jeremiah's ministry may be summed up in three words: good hope, labour, disappointment. No prophet commenced his labours with greater encouragement than Jeremiah. A king had ascended to the throne who was bringing back the times of the man after God's own heart. Josiah, too, was young—at most twenty years of age—in the beginning of his reformation. What might not be effected in a course of years, however corrupt and

degraded was the existing state of his people? So Jeremiah might think. Everyone begins with being sanguine; doubtless then, as now, many labourers in God's husbandry entered on their office with more lively hopes than their after fortune warranted. Whether or not, however, such hope of success encouraged Jeremiah's first exertions, very soon, in his case, this cheerful prospect was overcast, and he was left to labour in the dark. Huldah foretold a woe—an early removal of the good Josiah to his rest, as a mercy to him and to the nation, who were unworthy of him; a fierce destruction. This prophecy was delivered five years after Jeremiah entered into his office; he ministered in all forty years before the captivity; so early in his course were his hopes cut away.

III. All of us live in a world which promises well, but does not fulfil; all of us begin with hope and end with disappointment. Let us prepare for suffering and disappointment, which befit us as sinners, and are necessary for us as saints. Let us not turn away from trial when God brings it on us, or play the coward in the fight of faith. Take the prophets for an example of suffering affliction and of patience. "Behold, we count them happy who endure." The prophets went through sufferings to which ours are mere trifles; violence and craft combined to turn them aside, but they kept right on, and are at rest.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. v., p. 248; see also J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. viii., p. 124.

REFERENCE: ii. 2.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 352.

Chap. ii., vers. 6-8.—"Neither say they, Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt. . . ?" etc.

THERE are three shameful possibilities in life.

I. The possibility of dishonouring the great memories of life. The great memories of life are dishonoured (1) when the vividness of their recollection fades; (2) when their moral purpose is overlooked and misunderstood; (3) when their strengthening and stimulating function is suspended.

II. The possibility of under-estimating the interpositions of God.

III. The possibility of the leading minds of the Church being darkened and perverted. The priests, the pastors, and the prophets, all out of the way. How easy it is for such men to succumb in periods of general corruption is too evident

from universal history. The leader is often but the adroit follower. (1) Such men should watch themselves with constant jealousy; (2) such men should never be forgotten by those who pray.

PARKER, *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. ii., p. 569.

REFERENCES: ii. 10-11.—Parker, *The Ark of God*, p. 77. ii. 11.—J. G. Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 345. ii. 12, 13.—W. A. Essery, *Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 481.

Chap. ii., ver. 13.—"For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

CONSIDER some of the cisterns, and see whether it be not strictly true that they can hold no water.

I. The cistern of Sensualism. Not even the sensualist himself can always succeed in so utterly hoodwinking himself as to believe that the passions have a right to govern us. The flimsy, gaudy curtains of his sophistry are often burnt up around him by the fire of a kindling conscience, and he has to weave fresh concealments which in their turn will be consumed. He forgets that from their very nature the passions can never yield a constant happiness. Every stroke he puts to this cistern will put him farther from his aim; the more he strives to make it hold water the less certainly it will hold it, and if he continues his abortive labour until death his cistern will be his sepulchre, for he that liveth in pleasure is dead while he liveth.

II. The cistern of Wealth. The love of wealth for its own sake is a passion, and grows with that it feeds on, swelling far more rapidly than the acquisitions it makes, and therefore leaving the man who is the victim of it, day by day more in arrears of his aim.

Would you learn the weakness of wealth as well as its power? Look at the narrow limits within which after all its efficacy is bounded. If there are times when one feels that money answereth all things, there are times when one feels still more keenly that it answereth nothing.

III. The cistern of Intellectualism. Even the intellectual man is not satisfied; if he gets fresh light he seems only to realise more fully the fact that he is standing on the border of a vaster territory of darkness; that if he solves one mystery it serves but to show a thousand more.

IV. The cistern of Morality. This cistern, too, has chinks

and cracks. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." Christ said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." He is the Fountain of living waters.

E. MELLOR, *The Hem of Christ's Garment*, p. 236.

ALONG the journey of life there are many "cisterns," and *one* fountain. The children of Israel—in their passage through the desert—had one fountain all the way, and always the same. And to us it is the like. Let us see the difference between the fountain and the cisterns.

I. God makes fountains, or, for the word means the same thing, *springs*. Cisterns man makes. And therefore because God makes the fountain, it is of living waters. This is exactly what those thoughts and feelings and pleasures are which come straight from God Himself.

II. The water from the fountain follows a man wherever he goes, and just suits his appetite, and is sweetest and best with him at the last. The water from the cistern is always low and never reaches the margin of your real heart, and when you want it most, it is gone—is not.

III. Cisterns, the world's waters, lie in open places; the fountain is in the shade. Cisterns are of flimsy make; fountains are in the rock. You must go to Jesus if you want the Fountain.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 15th series, p. 237.

I. THE evils of which we are here accused: (1) departure from our Creator; (2) seeking our happiness in the creature rather than in the Creator.

II. The light in which these evils are here represented: (1) their folly; (2) their guilt; (3) their danger. (*a*) Let us return to the Fountain of living waters. (*b*) Having returned, let us avoid the cisterns.

G. BROOKS, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 145.

REFERENCES: ii. 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 356; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 203. ii. 19.—J. Keble, *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p. 384.

Chap. ii., ver. 22.—**"For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before Me, saith the Lord God."**

THE nitre here mentioned was a mineral substance, and the soap was a vegetable substance, both employed for the purpose of removing spots; and the meaning is, "Adopt what means

you may, and all the means within your power, still your sin will remain, it will strike through again, and be as fresh as the day on which it was committed. This is true of sin in both its aspects of *guilt* and *stain;* as guilt or wrong you cannot remove it, and as a blot you cannot remove it."

I. Who can expiate it as a matter of right? It does not require much thought to teach us that God could never give, to any of His creatures, the power of expiation, consistent with the stability of His own throne and government. To grant that a man has power to expiate a sin would be to grant that he has a right to insult God, and to sin whenever he desires. A man would have the right to sin because he could pay.

The commands of God are not the offspring of His will, as if they were capricious and might at any moment be changed or even reversed. The commands of God are God Himself in expression, and not merely the power of God or the will of God. They express His own eternal nature, and they appeal to our moral nature.

God's commands contemplate and secure, in so far as they are obeyed, our happiness. In other words, they not only enjoin the right way, but the happy way. To sin, therefore, is not only to disobey, but to disarrange. If, therefore, the line of obedience to the Divine will is also the line of blessedness to yourself, do you not see that there can be no expiation for disobedience?

II. What expiation can there be which you can offer? (1) Will punishment for a certain time be an expiation? Many mistake altogether the meaning of punishment. They treat it as if there were something virtuous in the endurance of it, when, in fact, there is no virtue at all. The first meaning of punishment is the expression of the disapproval and righteous anger of the lawgiver. (2) It may be said that suffering is not the only nitre and soap by means of which men seek to wash off the guilt of sin; that there is repentance and future amendment, and that these are sufficient as a set-off against any amount of transgression. Repentance does not mean sorrow only for sin. Repentance is a change of mind and heart and life; and in the dispensation under which we live, repentance is connected with faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Saviour did not admit the value and sufficiency of any repentance, which was separated from faith in Him. Repentance does not bear our sins; Christ bears our sins. We are

not bidden to look within us; we are bidden to look without us, to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.

E. MELLOR, *In the Footsteps of Heroes*, p. 79.

REFERENCES: ii. 22, 23.—W. Hay Aitken, *Mission Sermons*, vol. i., p. 37. ii. 25.—H. F. Burder, *Sermons*, p. 249. ii. 28.—Parker, *The Ark of God*, p. 301. ii. 32.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1634; S. Martin, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 2nd series, No. 20. iii. 1.—J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 365. iii. 4.—E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, 1st series, p. 23; J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 15th series, p. 133; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 145; D. E. Ford, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 411. iii. 12, 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1833. iii. 12, 14, 22.—*Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 265. iii. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 762; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 204; S. Cox, *Expositions*, 2nd series, p. 1. iii. 15.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 90. iii. 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1621. iii. 17.—J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 317.

Chap. iii., ver. 19.—"My Father."

I. THE Creator, the Preserver, the Benefactor, the Lover, of us all must be, in no common sense, the Father of us all. But infinitely nearer are those in whose hearts the grace of God has wrought its wondrous transformation. In them there are two things which make God a Father indeed. (1) The first is that mystic, incommunicable process, by which every believer is become an actual part of the body of Him, the one only Son of God, who alone has any right, by virtue of His own inherent nature, to say those words, "My Father"—and that union is the Christian's living of eternal childhood. (2) That new spirit—the spirit of adoption—every believer has received out of his oneness to the Lord Jesus Christ, by which he can now say, not as a dogma, not as an abstract part; but personally, devoutly, livingly, lovingly, "My Father."

II. The happiness and the strength of the opening year will depend upon the measure of the communion which you are able to sustain with the unseen. I know no way to sustain prayer like that which Christ adopted in His own prayers—the remembrance that it is with a "Father" that you have to do in prayer. There will be times when prayer will want the assurance of that thought. He will not seem near. He will answer you strangely. He will turn His face away from you. The more you try to grasp Him, the more you will lose your hold. And what is your escape? In the fact well laid home to your heart of

hearts, "He is my Father." He cannot be indifferent. He cannot deceive. He cannot disappoint us.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 6th series, p. 151.

REFERENCES: iii. 19.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 268; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 349. iv. 2.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xviii., p. 340.

Chap. iv., ver. 3.—"Thus saith the Lord, . . . Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns."

I. THERE is a special lesson in our text, because the facts of which it warns us are specially common. Hard and trodden soils, dull and heavy as the fool's heart, there are; thin and shallow soils, on which only hunger-bitten and blighted harvests grow, there are; and thank God there are also soils rich and good and deep, which bring forth fruit to perfection; but commoner than any of these are those soils in which the tares and wheat grow side by side, and the crisis of time and of eternity depends on this—whether we suffer the tares or the wheat to prevail. The thorns of the parable, and of the prophet's metaphor, are our evil nature; our evil impulses; the wrong which struggles within us, and which, if not suppressed, if not to the utmost of our power eradicated, will render it impossible for the good to grow.

II. Break up your fallow ground. (1) Make your choice now and for ever. In the field of your life, which shall grow—wheat or tares? that is, shall it be life or death? shall it be good or evil? shall it be light or darkness? shall it be shame or peace? (2) Let the choice be absolute. No tampering with the accursed thing; no truce with Canaan; no weak attempts to serve two masters; no wretched and wavering wish to grow both tares and wheat.

F. W. FARRAR, *In the Days of Thy Youth*, p. 169.

REFERENCES: iv. 3.—W. Simpson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 284; G. Litting, *Thirty Children's Sermons*, p. 141. iv. 10.—H. Alford, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. i., p. 267. iv. 14.—J. Foster, *Lectures*, 1st series, pp. 71, 85; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1573. iv. 20.—*Ibid.*, vol. vii., No. 349, and vol. xxiii., No. 1363. iv. 30.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxiii., No. 1363.

Chap. v., ver. 1.—"Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it."

THE lot of the prophet Jeremiah resembled that of most true

prophets in that it was sad; but it was, perhaps, exceptionally sad. The age in which he lived was one which, in many particulars, recalls our own; it was an age of crisis, of decaying faith, of change impending and actual. Jeremiah was not naturally a man of strong fibre. Timid, shrinking, sensitive, he was yet placed by God in the foreground of a forlorn hope, in which he was, as it were, predestined to failure and to martyrdom.

I. In this chapter Jeremiah is striving to bring home to his people that things are not as they should be. The days were evil, alike among high and low; there were carelessness, unbelief, self-seeking, insincerity, and, amid all, men were completely at their ease, they were quite secure that no evil could happen to them. Jeremiah thought differently; he knew that greed, falsity, unreality, corruption cannot last. They may be long-lived, but doomsday comes to them in the end.

II. No one will understand the Hebrew prophets who does not feel that they are not uttering vulgar, material oracles, but impassioned, imaginative, metaphorical appeals to eternal principles. The first step in understanding them consists in knowing that they were mainly forthtellers, not foretellers; mainly moral teachers, not predicting seers. The certain doom of sin, the sure hope of a Saviour—these are the two simple and awful principles which, on page after page, they set forth with so inspired a force.

III. A sneer has been made on the very name of the prophet of whom we are speaking, and the world thinks it has effectually depreciated any warning about present danger or future peril when it has called it a Jeremiah. Neither the world nor the Church can tolerate a prophet until they have killed him. One thing only can support him, and that is faith. He must see things as they are, see them steadily, and see them whole. For truth and faith the prophet will face death; he will gladly take his place by the side of God's victors, who have been earth's defeated. All men may hate him for Christ's sake, but he will be content.

F. W Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 161.

I. In the search for a man—look out, in the first place, for one who has a conscience. A true man will aim at having his conscience so healthily active, so acutely, yet not morbidly, sensitive, that it shall not be misled by any specious reasoning, nor

deceived by any evil example; but will sharply recoil from what is evil, and sting its possessor if he dare to yield to it.

II. If you are hunting for a man, look out for a being that has a heart. I use the word in its popular sense, and mean a warm, loving, affectionate nature.

III. If you want to find a man, look out for a being who has a soul. I mean that is capable of earnest, serious, solemn thought.

IV. Do not forget to look for a being that has a mind. Our Divine religion is given us, not merely to save souls, but to save man—man in the entirety of that complex life which Christ Himself assumed and redeemed. Do not be afraid that in cultivating your minds you will weaken the foundations of your piety.

V. In your efforts to find a man, you must further seek for a being who possesses a will. The brute is guided by its instincts and passions, it is the glory of man to keep his foot upon his nature, and to hold the reins of appetite with a tight hand.

VI. In your search for a man, look out for one who has a creed and a faith.

J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *Talks with Young Men*, p. 31.

REFERENCES: v. 1.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 146; J. R. Bailey, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 166; W. M. Arthur, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 276; A. W. Momerie, *Preaching and Hearing*, pp. 197, 209, 222.

Chap. v., ver. 2.—"And though they say, The Lord liveth; surely they swear falsely."

COMMONPLACE belief in God.

I. Commonplace belief is the assent we give to something which is told us, because we see no reason for thinking the thing untrue in itself, nor yet for calling in question the trustworthiness of the teller; we see no reason why we should deny it; it would imply more interest in the subject than we possess to deny it. We assent to it, and forget all about it the next minute; we have other things to think about, other things to take into consideration, to arrange for, to be anxious about; but it makes no difference to us, whether it be false or true. It neither excites our intellects nor warms our hearts. But let a man believe that the dearest being in all the world is unfaithful to him, and mocks at his fondness when he is absent, and boasts how easily he is duped. Let a beleaguered garrison closed in by ferocious enemies, with food and ammunition spent,

at last about to give in and take its grim chance, unable longer to resist—let it for a moment believe that to-morrow help will come, let but the sounds of familiar notes be carried on the breezes to ears growing indifferent and dead, and men will start up, cry, and look strong—wasted and gaunt though be their frames—and beat the drums and shout defiance, till the waiting wolves around them, just ready to spring, are daunted. These are not commonplace beliefs; these are what I will call realistic beliefs.

II. Many of us believe in God in a commonplace way, and because we do so the sensualists around us, who only care to eat and amuse themselves, are right when they say that our belief makes us no better than they are. It is quite possible that to many of us it would matter little if there were no God. We should be neither much better nor much worse. We should do the same work, think about the same things. We should only have to give up our private and family prayers, and perhaps that might almost be a relief. But there cannot be any worth in such a belief. If you do not believe in God as much as you believe in your children, your office, or your horse, how can you think that saying you believe in Him is a virtue which will secure your everlasting salvation?

> "First amend, my son,
> Thy faulty nomenclature; call belief
> Belief indeed, nor grace with such a name
> The easy acquiescence of mankind
> In matters nowise worth dispute."

W. PAGE-ROBERTS, *Liberalism in Religion*, p. 89.

Chap. v., ver. 3.—"O Lord, are not Thine eyes upon the truth?"

THERE are many thoughts rolled up in this grand proposition. Perhaps this stands first: That if God is always looking at the truth, then the shortest way and the best, by which we can see truth, is to look as God looks.

I. If God's eyes are upon the truth, then He looks more upon the true than He looks upon the false in everything He does so: (1) as respects truth in the world; (2) as regards our actions.

II. If God's eyes are upon the truth, are they not there for this very purpose, to defend and secure it. Is not then the truth quite safe? Why then are we anxious lest truth should fail in this world? Why do we talk as if truth were a poor,

weak, sickly thing, and likely to decay; and its existence very precarious? Is not God the Guardian of truth?

III. Take the thought a step higher. The "truth" is Christ. All religious truth, all moral truth, in its highest aspect, all physical truth, in its first germ, all gathers and centres itself there. Where then are the eyes of God fixed? In Christ He sees His own dear Son; Him in everything, everything in Him. And what does He see there? A world forgiven; a propitiation; the pardon, the restoration, the salvation, the peace the life, of the whole earth.

IV. Many events which are to be, lie for a long time wrapped up in the mysteries of prophecy. All the while—as much before the fulfilment as afterwards—it is truth to Him to whom all time and all eternity are one ever-present *now*. The subject of prophecy is a fact; as much a fact as it will be when it comes to pass. And the eyes of the Lord are upon it. That great flight of yet undeveloped truth is soaring on its high way, though man sees it not. The courses of nature—the history of our world—it is all ordained by a Secret Hand to secure that undeveloped "truth." We are only travelling on to the purpose of the Almighty. That purpose is truth.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 14th series, p. 45.

Chap. v., ver. 3.—"Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved," etc.

I. WHO is the rebel here spoken of? To rebel is properly to renew warfare. In this its original meaning the word "rebel" is applicable to every sinner. The war between man and his God was ended once for all when Christ suffered. Therefore, whosoever sins, also rebels—renews a finished war, and breaks an established reconciliation. The rebel spoken of is, in general terms, a rebel against his God. He is: (1) a rebel against right; (2) a rebel against power; (3) a rebel against love.

II. Observe, as the text and the subject bid us, that even this rebel was not let alone. The hand of God is far-reaching. It is not only in the home of the son, it is not only within the paradise of the upright, it is also over the remote exile, over the wilful wanderer, over the obstinate rebel, that that hand is stretched out still, for correction, for control,—if he will, for blessing. So long as we live, God is dealing with us; we cannot get away from His presence; we cannot really make our escape from His Spirit.

III. Note the use made by the rebellious of the Divine discipline. "Thou hast stricken them, but they have refused to receive correction." The correction is there, not for all only, but for each; only the rebel refuses to receive. (1) He misunderstands them. For a long time he does not connect them at all with the thought of God. (2) And when this cannot be; when the arrow fastens itself too deeply and too unmistakably within to leave doubt of whence it comes; then the misunderstanding of the Author changes into a misunderstanding of the motive. Then the man says, "Not because God loved me and would save, but because He hated and would destroy, is this misery come upon me; let me alone, that I may curse God and die." (3) He who has misunderstood the correction goes on to neutralise it by a slight and superficial treatment.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Voices of the Prophets*, p. 272.

REFERENCES: v. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1585; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 271. v. 5.—D. Moore, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3401. v. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i., No. 38; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 148; W. M. Punshon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 244. v. 13.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 147. v. 14.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 156. v. 21.—*Ibid.*, vol. iv., p. 206.

Chap. v., vers. 21-24.—"Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes and see not; which have ears and hear not: Fear ye not Me? saith the Lord," etc.

NOTICE the results of self-will as shown in the text.

I. Self-will in relation to the Divine government destroys the natural capacities and faculties of man.

II. Self-will in relation to the Divine government plunges the soul into irreverence.

III. Self-will dissociates the gifts of nature from the Giver.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. ii., p. 246.

REFERENCES: v. 22.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 201. v. 22-23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 220.

Chap. v., vers. 23, 24.—"This people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their hearts, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: He reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest."

I. ONE of our besetting sins is the habit of overlooking God's hand in the midst of His own works. It is a sin of very old

standing in the world, and it has its root in unbelief, because men will not trust God's word—will not in their hearts believe that He careth for them.

II. Note the practical lessons brought home to us by the return of the season of harvest. (1) One lesson is a lesson of patience, of trustful waiting upon God, arising out of a conviction that He will not fail in anything He has said; that "whilst the earth remaineth seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." (2) Another lesson which this season teaches us is a lesson of thankfulness. God has reserved to us the appointed weeks of the harvest. He has again brought food out of the earth, and bread to strengthen man's heart. Surely we should praise the Lord for His goodness, and lift up our hearts with our hands to Him in the heavens. (3) "The harvest is the end of the world." And why is it so? Because it shows forth what will happen in the end – what will be the proceedings of the day of judgment. Everywhere we are taught that the day of judgment will be a day of sifting and separation. If the righteous scarcely be saved in that day, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

R. D. B. RAWNSLEY, *Village Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 80.

REFERENCES: v. 24.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. viii., p. 185; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 880; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 179; R. Tuck, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 216; J. B. Heard, *Ibid.*, vol. xx., p. 294; E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, 1st series, p. 318. v. 25.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 140.

Chap. v., ver. 31.—"My people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"

IN more modern phrase the text reads: (1) People decline to look facts in the face; (2) No state of things exists anywhere but that it has its results as well as its cause.

I. You may read and know, if you will, that as our country advances, as we say, in wealth and the products of wealth, there is something else which is increasing too, and a very strange spectre it is, to be growing as it does under such circumstances. That spectre is poverty. Can we think on this and not know that there is the further question to be asked, "What will ye do in the end thereof?" Whatever might be the various ways in which the economist or politician might describe the working of the phenomena, the evil cause lies farthest back, of course, in our feelings on the subject, and in the thoughts of our hearts; and the selfishness of classes, which have the history of the

country for the present in their own hands, is the real root of all.

II. I know not that there have ever been in the world any principles, save those of Christ, which strike at selfishness as the root of all evil in society; and selfishness is a thing that can only be cured from within. No rules can put a stop to it, and unselfishness must be learnt as everything else has to be learnt, by practising—by beginning on a small scale, by going on to more difficult exercises; and the grammar of unselfishness is self-discipline and self-denial on a small scale. Any religion or religious sect which tells you not to trouble yourself about self-denial as a real discipline is an instrument of self-deception. It will not promote unselfishness; it will not in the end have any good or large effect upon society; and if churches become leavened into a general feeling that there is no special work for them in this direction, that it is not their business to teach self-discipline to each subject of their influence, the work of that church is nearly over, or at any rate it must make a new beginning.

ARCHBISHOP BENSON, *Boy Life: Sundays in Wellington College*, p. 89.

REFERENCES: v. 31.—S. Martin, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 4th series, No. 4; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times"*, vol. x., pp. 258, 266. vi. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 301.

Chap. vi., ver. 16.—"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

I. WE have in this text excellent general advice. Jeremiah says, "Stand and see and ask." I take these words to be a call to thought and consideration. Now, to set men thinking is the great object which every teacher of religion should set before him. Serious thought is one of the first steps towards heaven.

II. We have here a particular direction. "Ask for the old paths." The phrase meant the old paths of faith in which the fathers of Israel had walked for thirteen hundred years—the paths of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the paths in which the rule of life was the Decalogue, and the rule of worship was that elaborate, typical, sacrificial system of which the essence was faith in a coming Redeemer. One chief medicine for the spiritual diseases of the nineteenth century is a bold and

unhesitating inquiry for old paths, old doctrines, and the faith of the days that are past. Error, no doubt, is often very ancient; yet truth is always old. This age wants nothing new. What it wants is plain, distinct, unflinching teaching about the old paths. There has never been any spread of the Gospel, any conversion of nations or countries, any successful evangelistic work, except by the old-fashioned distinct doctrines of the early Christians and the Reformers.

III. Notice the precious promises with which our text concludes. "Walk in the old paths," saith the Lord, "and ye shall find rest to your souls." Rest for the labouring and heavy-laden is one of the chief promises which the Word of God offers to man, both in the Old Testament and the New. The rest that Christ gives in the "old paths" is no mere outward repose. It is rest of heart, rest of conscience, rest of mind, rest of affection, rest of will. Rest such as this the Lord Jesus gives to those who come to Him in the "old paths," by showing them His own finished work on the Cross, by clothing them in His own perfect righteousness, and washing them in His own precious blood. Faith, simple faith, is the one thing needful in order to possess Christ's rest.

BISHOP RYLE, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 200.

IN what respect should we follow old times? Now here there is this obvious maxim: What God has given us from heaven cannot be improved; what man discovers for himself does admit of improvement; we follow old times, then, so far as God has spoken in them, but in those respects in which God has not spoken in them we are not bound to follow them.

I. The knowledge which God has not thought fit to reveal to us is (1) knowledge connected merely with this present world; (2) scientific knowledge.

II. The knowledge which God has given, and which does not admit of improvement by lapse of time, is religious knowledge. The inspired prophets of Israel are careful to prevent any kind of disrespect being shown to the memory of former times, on account of that increase of religious knowledge with which the later ages were favoured. As to the reverence enjoined and taught the Jews towards persons and times past, we may notice: (1) the commandment given them to honour and obey their parents and elders. (2) This duty was taught by such general injunctions (more or less express) as the text. (3) To bind them to the performance of this duty, the past was made the

pledge of the future, hope was grounded upon memory; all prayer for favour sent them back to the old mercies of God. "The Lord hath been mindful of us; He will bless us"—this was the form of their humble expectation. (4) As Moses directed the eyes of his people towards the line of prophets which the Lord their God was to raise up from among them, ending in the Messiah, they in turn dutifully exalt Moses, whose system they were superseding. Our blessed Lord Himself sums up the whole subject, both the doctrine and the Jewish illustration of it, in His own authoritative words: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. v., p. 157; see also J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vii., p. 243.

REFERENCES: vi. 16.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. x., pp. 307, 317; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 273; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 149; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 170. vi. 16, 17.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 265. vi. 16-19.—W. Hay Aitken, *Mission Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 163. vi. 20.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 335. vi. 29.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 890. vii. 5-7.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 58.

Chap. vii., vers 9, 10.—"Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely; . . . and come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?"

THERE is a deal of vague floating excuse in our minds, which practically amounts to making what we call Fate a scapegoat for our sins. There are two forms which such an attempt at excuse for wrong-doing may assume: (1) "We are delivered to do all these abominations" by certain inflexible laws, over which we can exercise no control,—say some; (2) "We are delivered to do all these abominations" by the force of our nature, which it is not in our power to alter,—say others. Such are generally the two forms which this argument from fate assumes.

I. Our idea of God's dealings with us is very largely influenced by the condition of the age in which we live. Our thoughts of the Divine government will be largely influenced and coloured by the principles of human government which prevail around us. For example, states make laws, and often

they press very severely and unjustly upon individuals. We cannot help it. Our finite wisdom and our limited power prevent our making perfect laws, or rather render it impossible for us to make the necessary and wise exceptions to them in dealing with individuals. Now we must not transfer to God our own finality and failure. God's laws are universal and general; God's dealings with men are particular and individual. Each one has to learn the moral law of God and its bearing on his own nature. That very law, and the constancy of its action on you, are your real safeguards; it makes you a free man, not a slave of fate.

II. The other form which fatalism takes as an excuse for sin is: I am born with a particular nature, and I cannot help it. To say that you have a particular kind of nature which cannot resist a particular class of sin is to offer to God an excuse which you would never accept from your fellow-men. You treat every one of your fellow-men as having power to resist the inclination of his natural disposition, so far as its indulgence would be injurious to you. You never find fault with a man for any faculty or temper which he may have, but you do hold him responsible for the direction and control of it. The great heroes whom we justly reverence are not those who have destroyed, but those who have preserved and used aright the natural impulses and passions which have been given them.

T. T. SHORE, *The Life of the World to come*, p. 109.

REFERENCES: vii. 10.—H. W. Beecher, *Forty-eight Sermons*, vol. i., p. 295. vii. 12.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. i., p. 168; E. Paxton Hood, *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. i., p. 474. vii. 18.—W. Hay Aitken, *Mission Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 207; J. Sherman, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 299. viii. 4-7.—E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, 1st series, p. 53. viii. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 169.

Chap. viii., vers. 7-8.—**"Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming: but My people know not the judgment of the Lord," etc.**

OUR text makes mention of the discrimination of times by the faculty of instinct, and contrasts it favourably with man's want of discrimination, though endowed with reason.

I. The birds of passage show, in their periodic migrations, their discernment of seasons, and this, both as regards the time of their visiting and the time of their leaving us. Probably

some peculiarity in the material structure of the migratory birds renders them extremely sensitive to changes of temperature, and as these changes always recur at certain seasons of the year, they observe seasons, and make a corresponding change in their places of abode, so great is their sagacity, so true their instinct.

II. Consider the operation of unsanctified reason in discerning times. The season of grace which God allots to His people, admits of comparison in many respects with the warm and inviting springtide. (1) Consider the invitations of this season of grace. Invitations are held forth by the Saviour's voice in the pages of the written Word, by the Holy Spirit, by the Church, the Bride, and by the Providence of God. (2) If the majority of sinners be not gently won by the invitations of grace, they will haply be driven by terror to take refuge in these offers. Let growing age and growing infirmity bring death and judgment very near—the prospect will surely urge the wanderer to return with hurried steps to the sheepfold? But no, it is not found so. The sinner, however near he may stand to the brink of the grave, puts far away the evil day, instead of taking warning from the prospect of it. We are forced to the conclusion that, although endowed with faculties far higher and nobler than that of instinct, man evinces less intelligence in matters which most nearly concern him, than is evinced every day by the brute creation. Neither the possession of reason nor the possession of revelation can by themselves roll away from man the reproach of folly. Reason must be sanctified before its exercise can make him truly wise. Reason must submit like a little child to be led by the hand of revelation. The Holy Spirit must turn the dead letter into a living letter, the venerable archive into the daily counsellor.

E. M. GOULBURN, *Sermons in the Parish Church of Holywell*, p. 129.

REFERENCES: viii. 9.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 278. viii. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1658. viii. 19, 20.—*Ibid.*, vol. xi., No 608.

Chap. viii., ver. 20.—"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

No hope, no hope! That was the peculiar burden of Jeremiah, that was the vision forced upon him, the message he was constrained to deliver, while the people and their leaders were nursing the assurance that all was going well, that a work was being prosecuted which would secure salvation.

I. Few things are more unpalatable and painful, than to feel it incumbent on you to say to any for whom you entertain sentiments of friendship and affection, what is calculated to damp and dishearten; to spoil the dreams of those who are dreaming pleasantly, deliciously; to destroy or disturb fond hopes: than to feel it incumbent upon you, instead of sympathising with the joy of such hopes—as you fain would, were it possible—to shake your head and contradict them. Comforting and comfortable as the dream may be, the sleeper, in his own best interests, must, if possible, be roused, since the dream is beguiling him perchance to courses that are wrong, and is mis-shaping and impairing him for what is at hand.

II. By how many has the cry of Jeremiah been breathed inwardly, with sorrow and bitterness, concerning themselves, as they have stood contemplating what they have and what they are, after seasons in their history—seasons that had enfolded golden opportunity, or shone bright with promise. Who is there beyond the boundaries of youth at all, who has not had his seasons of promise, that have left him sighing forlornly over broken hopes? Infinite in this respect is the pathos of human life, crying dumbly evermore for the infinite pity of God. And yet may we not believe, do we not feel to our solace, that at the least, something has always been reaped? reaped for sowing, albeit with tears, in fields beyond; nay, that even in the more lowly and penitent sense of shortcoming, which seems perhaps almost all that has been gained, we shall be carrying away with us from hence, a gathered seed grain, to be for fruit—perchance for the fruit we have hitherto missed, behind the veil.

S. A. TIPPLE, *Sunday Mornings at Upper Norwood*, p. 39.

REFERENCES: viii. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1562; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 368; A. F. Barfield, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 363; R. L. Browne, *Sussex Sermons*, p. 113; R. Storrs, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 315.

Chap. viii., ver. 22.—"Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of My people recovered?"

I. Sin is the consumption not of the body, but of the soul, and without seeking to establish any curious analogies, but supposing that you were a mere neutral visitor, a mere unconcerned spectator of this world, you would see all its inhabitants labouring under a disease which has these characteristics: (1) It has its seat in the very citadel of life. Sin is deep in all the

soul. The carnal mind is enmity against God, so unsound that it is not subject to God's law, neither indeed can be; the whole head is sick, the whole heart faint. (2) It is an hereditary disease. It is in the race, inveterate, a cleaving curse, a rankling virus. Each one is "shapen in sin," and with the dawning intelligence of each, sin is what first develops. (3) It is a fatal disease. It has as good as taken the life of the soul already, and when it has run its course it will infallibly end in the second death. It has no tendency to arrest itself, and there never has been an instance where it stopped spontaneously, and of its own accord passed away. (4) It is a flattering disease. Very seldom does the sinner feel as if he were labouring under a deadly distemper. (5) In many instances it proves an acute and agonising disease.

II. Notice a few analogies between Judah's balsam and that better balm which heals the wounds of sin—the anguish of the soul. (1) There was no great show about the tree itself. It had no particular grandeur or beauty. And so with the Saviour. He had no outward form nor comeliness. (2) The balm tree was a stranger in Palestine. The Saviour was a stranger in our world. (3) In order to obtain its healing essence, they used to wound the balm tree. And in order to give forth in one conclusive act the merit of His life, the Saviour's side was pierced. He was obedient unto death. He poured out His blood and made His soul an offering for sin.

J. HAMILTON, *Works*, vol. vi., p. 151.

REFERENCE: viii. 22.—W. M. Punshon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 245.

Chap. ix., ver. 1.—"Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"

THE "weeping prophet" is the title often given to Jeremiah. He is not a popular prophet. Unhappy men are not commonly popular men. Yet this one had ample reason for the depression under which he lived and the minor key which runs through the strain of his writings. He had a most delicately sensitive nature, a most profound attachment to the cause of God, an intense patriotic love of his native land; yet it was his lot to live at an age when the people of God had fallen into most fearful apostasy, and the most terrible judgments were impending over them. It was his mission to tell the people of their sins, to rebuke the nobles for their oppression, the humbler orders for their vileness,

the priesthood for their falseness, even his fellow-prophets for their infidelity to the living God. To his own times and people he was the prophet of doom.

I. Jeremiah represents a class of good men and women of whom some exist in every age. There are some good men of whom it must be conceded that they are not gay Christians. They have a peculiarly sensitive and deep nature. Their religion is proportionately deep and tender.

II. Christians of the broken heart, it must be confessed, are not apt to be popular with the world; very hard things are said of them, very unjust judgments they have to bear in silence.

III. The class of men and women of whom Jeremiah is the type possess a very profound style of Christian character. Eternity will show to us all that some of the world's great souls are among them.

IV. Such Christians as the weeping prophet represents are men and women of great spiritual power. The world does not like them, but cannot help respecting them. We love realities after all. We feel the power of the man who knows the most of them and feels them most profoundly.

V. Who can help seeing that broken-hearted Christians are in some respects very nearly akin to the Lord Jesus Christ?

VI. These Christians of the broken heart are sure of a very exalted rank in heaven.

A. PHELPS, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 7.

REFERENCE: ix. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 150.

Chap. ix., vers. 23, 24.—**"Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, . . . but let him that glorieth glory in this that he understandeth and knoweth Me," etc.**

THERE is at least so much similarity between the nature of God and the nature of man that both God and man can take delight in the same thing. The spirit of the text is saying, "Take delight in loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness because *I* take delight in them; come up to My moral altitude, place your affections where I place Mine.

I. "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom: (1) because of the necessary littleness of man's vastest acquisitions; (2) because the widest knowledge involves but partial rulership.

II. Is man then without an object in which to glory? It is as natural for man to glory as it is natural for man to breathe, and God who so ordered his nature, has indicated the true theme of glorying. Man's glorying is to be restrained until he

reaches the "Me," the Personality, the living One. Let him that glorieth glory in knowing God as a moral Being, as the righteous Judge, as the loving Father.

III. The whole subject may be comprehended in four points. (1) God brands all false glorying; (2) God has revealed the proper ground of glorying, that ground is knowledge of God, not only as Creator and Monarch, but as Judge, and Saviour, and Father; (3) God, having declared moral excellence to be the true object of glorying, has revealed how moral excellence may be attained. Loving-kindness, righteousness, and judgment are impossibilities apart from Christ; (4) God has revealed the objects in which He glories Himself. "For in these things I delight, saith the Lord." They who glory in the objects which delight Jehovah must be drinking at pure and perennial springs.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. iii., p. 481.

REFERENCES: ix. 23-24.—J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 357; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 150; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 484, and vol xxiii., p. 139; E. Johnson, *Ibid.*, vol. xvi., p. 148. x. 10-12.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 133. x. 11.—J. Hiles Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 155. xi. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 838. xii. 1.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xx., p. 277.

Chap. xii., ver. 5.—"If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

THE difficulty implied by this proverb appears—

I. In this, that man is less a match for Satan now than when Satan proved himself more than a match for man. Beaten in Eden, where else can man look for success? Overcome in our innocence, what hope remains for us in this warfare now? Beneath a heaven that has empty thrones and in a world full of ruins, how may poor fallen creatures help to conquer an enemy who has won victories in the fields both of heaven and earth, and overcome the innocence both of angels and of men? We have been reduced to slavery—and did bondsmen ever win where freemen lost? But that we go to battle in the name of Jesus, backed by the Lord God of Hosts, we had had no answer to the question of the text.

II. If we were overcome by sin ere it had grown into strength, we are now less able to resist it. The difficulty of resisting our bad passions and corrupt nature, grows with

man's growth, and strengthens with his strength. The farther we go down the slopes of evil, it is the more difficult to return. Nor could we ever hope that, having been overcome of sin when it was weak, we should overcome it when it is strong, but that faith, undaunted by difficulties can say, "What art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain!"

III. Consider how these difficulties are to be overcome. Take two cases—those of Peter and Abraham—where they, who had been overcome by the lesser overcame the greater trial; and though wearied by the footmen, nobly contended with horses. It was God that made them strong; and what they did, they did through the power of His might. He strengthened them with all might by His Spirit in the inner man, and though these actors have left the stage for lesser men to fill, the might, the power, the promises remain—God remains behind. "One man shall chase a thousand." "He that is feeble among them shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God."

T. GUTHRIE, *Family Treasury*, May 1861, p. 257.

Chap. xii., ver. 5.—" . . . If in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?"

THE river Jordan was an eminent and appropriate type of death, as being the barrier which parted the wilderness of Israel's sojourn from the promised land of their assured inheritance.

I. The reasonableness of the question in the text will be made manifest by pointing out certain circumstances which make death more appalling than any other calamity. (1) Death must be met alone. We are so constituted that in seasons of danger, difficulty, and alarm nothing is a more comfortable stay for the mind than a resort to the connections with which Providence has surrounded us—to the old familiar faces of our kinsmen or our friends. But in death every possibility of resort to human sympathy will be cut off from us; our spirits must encounter the last enemy alone. (2) There is a failure of every former confidence in the hour of death. Every plank of refuge shall be broken up, every mooring which held thee to the shore of life shall be loosened, and there shalt thou be launched alone upon the billows to meet the tempest of the wrath of God. (3) Another circumstance of terror attaching to death is that it ushers us into a new and strange world. The heart of man is constantly turning the energies of its attachments around the house of its

pilgrimage. A future sphere of existence will be an untried sphere. Well may flesh and blood shrink from the prospect of being effectually unhinged from all that is usual and accustomed, divested of every material and earthly association. (4) Our great enemy, as in all our trials so in this especially, will be at hand to improve it to our ruin.

II. To every sincere believer in Christ the horror with which circumstances invest death is entirely dispelled. (1) The Christian is not left in the pitiful plight of the worldling and sinner, to encounter death alone. His Redeemer is in spirit with him, Christ's rod and Christ's staff they comfort him. (2) If all earthly stays and confidences be broken up, the Christian has an anchor of the soul sure and steadfast; it is the word and the work of Christ. (3) The Christian's soul has, during life, contracted an acquaintance with the new sphere into which the swelling of Jordan bears him away. Death ushers him into no strange scene, and introduces him to no strange company. (4) The great enemy shall be defeated in his last assault upon the Christian. God shall prepare a table before His people in the presence of their enemies.

E. M. GOULBURN, *Sermons in the Parish Church of Holywell*, p. 51.

REFERENCES: xii. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 635; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 293; G. Dawson, *Sermons on Daily Life and Duty*, p. 313; B. J. Snell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 312; J. Pulsford, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 246. xiii. 1-11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1706. xiii. 13.—*Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 107. xiii. 14.—Parker, *Christian Commonwealth*, Sept. 16th, 1886. xiii. 15.—*Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 109; R. Newton, *Bible Warnings*, p. 239. xiii. 15-17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1748; W. Hay Aitken, *Mission Sermons*, vol. i., p. 23. xiii. 16.—W. T. Bull, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 97; J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 302. xiii. 20.—A. Davies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 324; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. i., p. 3. xiii. 22-25.—W. Hubbard, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 285.

Chap. xiii., ver. 23.—"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" Chap. iv., ver. 14.—"O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodgewithin thee?"

I. CONVERSION is wholly the work of God, man himself being incapable of effecting it, by any means, or through any instrumentality. What is the judgment of Scripture with respect to the condition of man as a fallen creature? (1) "He cannot

please God." The Divine Spirit puts forth His power when men are born again; and until He thus puts forth His power, they are in the flesh, and cannot please God however much their actions may seem to resemble those which His word enjoins. (2) Man in his natural state cannot love and serve God. He is described as being without God, and as being alienated from Him. (3) Man cannot of himself do good either in the way of thinking or acting. (4) Man cannot of himself believe God's word. (5) Man in his natural state is represented in the Scripture as dead in sin. As the ear of the dead is sealed up against every sound, so are men while unrenewed insensible to the calls of God addressed to them in His word. As the dead hand cannot grasp, so the spiritually dead cannot lay hold of God's gracious offers.

II. While we say that nothing which men can do can qualify them for conversion, or merit conversion, or be the cause of conversion, we say at the same time, that there are certain things which they may do, and which they are bound to do, towards their conversion. (1) As the Word of God is the common instrument of conversion, men may do something toward their conversion and are bound to do so, by the way in which they read it, and the improvement they make of what they read. (2) Men may do something towards their conversion in the improvement they make of the ordinary means of grace, especially the preaching of the gospel. (3) Men can do something toward their conversion through the instrumentality of prayer. (4) They can avoid occasions to sin, by which they have been led away; they can serve God more faithfully, up to the light they have received; they can choose the company of the godly. All these are helps onward in the right path to Christ's believing people.

A. D. DAVIDSON, *Lectures and Sermons*, p. 259.

REFERENCES: xiii. 23.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol x., p. 108; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 276; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 220; J. Keble, *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p. 374. xiv. 7-9.—A. Maclaren, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 337; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1661. xiv.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Septuagesima to Ash Wednesday*, p. 313; S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 12. xv. 1.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2112. xv. 12. —Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 993. xv. 15.—S. Greg, *A Layman's Legacy*, p. 160. xv. 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 980, and vol. xviii., No. 1079. xv. 20.—I. Taylor, *Saturday Evening*, p. 178. xv. 21.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 286. xvi. 16.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 1st series, p. 86. xvi. 20.—

Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 125. xvii. 1.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 812. xvii. 5, 8.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 181. xvii. 9.—*Ibid.*, p. 23; W. H. Murray, *American Pulpit of the Day*, p. 295; W. Wilkinson, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 151. xvii. 10.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, 1st series, p. 103.

Chap. xvii., ver. 11.—"As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool."

I. The Bible has nothing to say against a man's getting rich by just and honourable means. The need of money, and a moderate desire for it, form a most valuable incentive to industry. We would not be assured that the blessing of the Lord maketh rich, if wealth were necessarily an evil. To be altogether indifferent to material profit, so far fom being a recommendation, betokens an unmanly and defective character. You ought to wish to increase your substance, if God will give you grace to use it well.

II. We learn from the text that riches unrighteously gotten are no blessing. It is our Maker's design that wealth should be begotten of industry: real hard work. There is no royal road to opulence; and, as Solomon said nearly three thousand years ugo, "he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent." To make money rapidly, even by honest means, is perilous; how much more so by questionable methods?

III. As the text teaches, the penalty on the acquisition of unrighteous gain generally follows even in this life. Perhaps this does not hold so markedly in our times as under the Old Dispensation, because immortality with its just retribution is now more clearly revealed. Still, no thoughtful person can fail to see how often a terrible Nemesis pursues the fraudulent man even in "the midst of his day," and how, at his end, even the world styles him a fool. Some unexpected time comes, some monetary crisis, some commercial disaster, and all his hoarded gains take wing and fly away; the unprincipled man is left, like the silly partridge, to sit disconsolate in an empty nest.

J. Thain Davidson, *Forewarned—Forearmed*, p. 61.

References: xvii. 12-14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1786. xvii. 14.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 26; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1658.

Chap. xvii., ver. 12.—"A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary."

I. Man's Refuge. No creature so much needs the shelter

and defence of a safe hiding-place as man. His sources of danger are more than can be numbered, and with an infected nature he travels an infested road. Beset with foes, he is in constant need of shelter, and often cries out for deliverance.

II. Man's refuge is a sanctuary. A refuge is no place to rest or abide in. A place which is only a refuge furnishes but a temporary shelter. But a refuge, which is also a sanctuary, a Divine house, affords not only shelter, but rest, repose, and satisfaction for all we need or can desire. The house of God may well be a home for man. And he who enters such a refuge soon discovers that it will be to him all his desire.

III. Man's refuge is not only sacred, but royal. "A glorious high throne." The house of God is also the seat and source of all rule, authority, and power. It is a throne. From which we learn that the house of God, which is man's refuge and home, is its own defence. A throne incapable of its own defence is no longer a throne.

IV. This sanctuary-refuge-throne is spoken of as an exalted throne. Man needs a high defence. Our refuge towers above all, not only covering the need of our present station, but of all its future possibilities of growth.

V. And this exalted throne is glorious in the history of its exaltation. Its exaltation has not been by might but by right. That the throne became a refuge has given a hallowed joy to the universe. The refuge crowns the throne.

VI. Our refuge has been set up from the beginning. The provision for the requirements of man's fallen nature was no after-thought, but a forethought. His refuge-sanctuary-throne was "set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was."

VII. Note the personality of the refuge. (1) An impersonal refuge could never afford shelter and defence for man against his personal foes. (2) An impersonal refuge could never afford rest to, nor become a home for, man. Man needs man, a human security, a human joy, a human home, a warm maternal bosom on which to rest; not even God as God, but God as man.

W. PULSFORD, *Trinity Church Sermons*, p. 161.

REFERENCES: xvii. 14.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 245. xvii. 17.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 120. xviii. 1-4.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 152.

Chap. xviii., vers. 1-6.—"The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear My words," etc.

CONSIDER what Jeremiah's business was, and how the potter might help him in understanding and performing it.

I. Jeremiah sees a man engaged in a task to which he is devoting all his thoughts. He designs to make some clay into a vessel of a certain shape; the form or pattern is present to his mind; he is fully resolved that the material with which he is working shall come forth in that form and no other. But apparently it disappoints him. One piece of clay after another is marred in his hands; he has to break his vessel again and again; he goes on perseveringly till he has done the thing which he intended to do. If there is any force or worth in the analogy at all, it must mean that there is a form according to which God is seeking to mould men and nations. It must imply that He is patiently, continually, working for the accomplishment of this purpose. Here, then, was the mystery of a people's repentance. If they acknowledged the will which was working upon them, if at any time they yielded to it and desired to be formed by it, this was that conversation and inward change which He was seeking to produce.

II. The prophet looks upon this symbol as teaching him the principle of God's government of a people. I apprehend that we shall learn some day that the call to individual repentance and the promise of individual reformation has been feeble at one time; productive of turbulent, violent, transitory effects at another; because it has not been part of a call to national repentance, because it has not been connected with a promise of national reformation. We must speak again the ancient language that God has made a covenant with the nation, and that all citizens are subjects of an unseen and righteous King, if we would have a hearty, inward repentance which will really bring us back to God.

III. Jeremiah could not bring the image of the potter's work to bear with its proper force upon Israelites at that moment if he confined the purpose of God within the limits which they had fixed for it. As he gazed on the potter and saw how one piece of clay after another was marred, and yet how the thing he designed was at last done; it came with an awful vision of what was preparing for his land, with a bright vision of what must ultimately follow from every judgment.

That which seemed now compact, and yet which consisted of elements that were always ready to separate from each other, might split into fragments: but the vessel must be made: not after some different type, but after the original and perfect type which dwelt not in the dead matter but in the living mind of Him who was shaping it.

F. D. MAURICE, *Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament*, p. 395.

REFERENCE: xviii. 1-10.—E. H. Plumptre, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 469.

Chap. xviii., vers. 3, 4 (with Jer. xix., vers. 1, 2, 10, 11).

I. THERE is a Divine ideal possible for every man. God has not made any man simply for destruction. He has an archetype or pattern before Him, which it is possible for each man to reach. That ideal is not the same for all, but it is in each appropriate to and in correspondence with the environment in which he is placed.

II. This ideal is to be attained by a man only through implicit faith in God, and willing obedience to His commands. It was a profound saying of a great philosopher that "we command nature by obeying her." And similarly we may affirm that we command God by obeying Him.

III. If such faith and obedience are refused by a man, that man's history is marred, and it is no longer possible for him to become what otherwise he might have been. Sin mars the Divine ideal for a man. It deprives him of the full advantage of the skill and help of God in the development of His character. It is no longer possible even for God, in consistency with the moral nature of His government, to make of him all that was originally attainable by him.

IV. If the man should repent and turn to the Lord, he may yet, through the rich forbearance of God, rise to a measure of excellence and usefulness, which, though short of that which was originally possible to him and intended for him, will secure the approval of the Most High.

V. If the man harden himself into persistent rejection of God, show stubborn impenitence, there comes a time when improvement is no longer possible, and there is nothing for him but everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power. The clay that was plastic was made into another vessel; but the bottle that was burned into hardness, and was found to be worthless, was broken into

pieces and cast out. So when impenitence is perversely persisted in there comes a point at which the heart is so hardened that impenitence is neither thought of nor desired, and the man is abandoned to perdition.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Contrary Winds*, p. 150.

Chap. xviii., ver. 6.—"Cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord."

I. EVERY human life is, first of all, an idea in the mind of God. The potter is an artist, and it is the thoughts of his head he embodies in the vessels he makes. Our beings are Divine productions, embodied thoughts of the Divine heart, the very work of the Divine hands.

II. Every human life is shaped for a Divine use. When the potter turns a vessel on his wheel, the first pulse of thought concerning it touches its use. It is the use which determines the shape. And this holds good in the shaping of human life by God. We are created to be vessels for God, and of God; vessels of His sanctuary, set apart for His service, and filled with all sweet and wholesome things.

III. The third truth in this parable is that lives tried in one shape are sometimes broken up and re-shaped to fulfil themselves in new spheres of different capacities and shapes of the Divine character and life.

IV. God has left it to man himself to decide whether he will be a vessel of honour or dishonour. If we were *mere* clay, God being Lord and Maker of us, each would pass to the fulfilment of the Divine purpose as stars and trees do, and there would be no after-story of sorrow—no divergence from the Divine intention. But we are human beings, *not* mere clay. The Creator has power over the lives He moulds, but it is never so wielded as to quench the power of choice He has given to us.

V. Be true to the Divine intention and shaping of your lives. The Great Householder reserves for the highest honour the cup which carries the wine to His own lips or to the lips of His guests. Be, each of you, that cup for God. So shall God be well-pleased with the work of His hands.

A. MACLEOD, *Days of Heaven upon Earth*, p. 23.

REFERENCES: xviii. 11.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 279. xviii. 12.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 684. xviii. 18-19.—J. S. Howson, *Good Words*, 1868, p. 617. xix. 13.—S. Greg, *A Layman's Legacy*, p. 223.

Chap. xxii., vers. 8, 9.—"And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbour, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this great city?" etc.

I. THE man who wrote these words was a very sorrowful man; one who was full of grief for what he saw, and for what he expected. He was an Israelite, one of the race of Abraham. He believed that God had chosen his nation to be a blessing to all nations. But he felt that his country, the country which he loved, was polluted by the evil things that were done in it. He could not tear himself from his nation. He was tearing himself from God if he did. God's covenant was with Israel. He was in God's covenant because he was an Israelite. Whatever calamities befel Israel must befal him. Jeremiah supposes that people of other countries would walk through the land of Israel, and see its capital city in ruins, and would say, "Wherefore hath the Lord done this to this great city?" And this, he says, would be the answer, "Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord, and have worshipped other gods and served them." He who was their true Lord would let them learn by hard punishment what was the fruit of their wilful ways, what comes of forgetting His commandments.

II. God has made with us a new covenant, a better covenant than that which He made with the Jews, because God does not merely say to us, "Keep My commandments," but He says, "I will give you My Holy Spirit that you may keep them." But the commandments which He bids us to keep are the very same. And when people grow indifferent to these commandments, then it fares with us as it fared with the Jews. We cease to be a strong people, a united people, a wise and understanding people, in the sight of the nations; we become weak, and divided, and foolish. If we hold fast to the covenant it will go well with us, and with our seed after us. We shall be true citizens of our land. God will bless our land and cause His face to shine upon it.

F. D MAURICE, *Sermons Preached in Country Churches*, p. 305.

REFERENCES: xxii. 19.—J. Thain Davidson, *Talks with Young Men*, p. 233. xxii. 21.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. i., p. 48.

Chap. xxii., ver. 29 -"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord."

I. THE manner of this cry. In form it is obviously and intensely peculiar. When the awakener utters such a piercing

cry you may conclude that the sleep of the sleeper is deep. The two elements multiplied into each other which swell into a peal so loud, are the mercy that glows in the warner's breast, and the danger to which the sleeper lies exposed. The earth itself —all the creatures on it under man—have a quick ear for their Maker's voice, and never needing, never get a call so urgent. The alacrity of the creatures that lie either above or beneath him in the scale of creation brings out in higher relief the disobedience of man. The mystery of God's mercy to man is, we know, one thing into which unfallen angels desire to look; the mystery of man's heedlessness of God must be another. Angels, our elder brothers, must wonder both at our deep sleep and at God's long, loud, awakening cry. Both mysteries lie beyond their view.

II. The matter of this cry. (1) The speaker is the only living and true God. (2) The thing spoken is the word of the Lord. (*a*) The word of the Lord lies in the Scriptures; (*b*) the word of the Lord in the Scriptures is mercy; (*c*) the word of the Lord is Christ. (3) The injunction to regard that word: "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." The Eternal Word has come into the world to show us the Father, "Hear ye Him."

III. Several aspects of this shrill warning cry remain for consideration. (1) The earth so summoned, has already, in a sense most interesting and important, heard the word of the Lord. Christ's Kingdom is even now more powerful on the earth than any other kingdom. (2) The earth through all its bounds will one day hear and obey the word of the Lord. (3) When the earth hears its Lord's word forthwith it calls upon the Lord. (4) Earth—that is, men in the body—should hear the word of the Lord, for to them it brings a message of mercy. (5) Earth —the dust of the dead in Christ—shall hear the word of the Lord, and shall come forth.

W. ARNOT, *Roots and Fruits of the Christian Life*, p. 198.

REFERENCE: xxii. 29.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 151.

Chap. xxiii., ver. 6.—"The Lord our Righteousness."

I. WE may view the text as simply an announcement of important truth. It stands there on the sacred page like a profound oracular utterance from the hidden shrine of truth, given forth for our enlightenment and everlasting benefit. (1) The Lord is

our righteousness, inasmuch as the purpose and plan of justifying sinners originated with Him. (2) The Lord is our righteousness, inasmuch as He Himself alone has procured righteousness for us. (3) The Lord is our righteousness, inasmuch as it is through His grace and by His free donation that we receive righteousness.

II. These words may be contemplated as the utterance of personal belief and confidence. Here we present to our minds the view of a body of persons who avow and proclaim that the Lord is *their* righteousness; and who know, reverence, and confide in God as thus apprehended. They have no confidence in the flesh, their trust is in God alone. They look not to works of charity, or self-denial, or penance, for acceptance with God; they ask only to be accepted in the beloved. They know in whom they have believed, and therefore they do not hesitate to stand up and avow before the world that all their trust and all their hope is in that worthy name, The Lord our Righteousness. In their lips this is the language (1) of faith; (2) of hope; (3) of joy and gratitude.

III. We may contemplate the text as a directory to the inquirer. Sinners are supposed to be anxious to know the way of acceptance with God. Conscious of guilt, they feel their need of a justifying righteousness in order that they may stand without blame before the moral Governor of the universe. With them, therefore, the foremost and most pressing question is, How may I, a sinner, be righteous before God? To such the words of my text give a brief but most satisfactory answer. They are a proclamation from God Himself, that in Him is the salvation of the sinner found. They direct the inquirer away from self, away from all creature help, away from all methods of personal or sacerdotal propitiation, and carry his thoughts to God—to God in Christ, as the sole Author and Bestower of righteousness. The Lord is our righteousness, and He alone. His voice to the lost and guilty sons of men is "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."

W. LINDSAY ALEXANDER, *Sermons*, p. 66.

I. THIS verse teaches us that the Son of David and the King of Israel is the source of our righteousness, the exhibition and presentation of it before our consciences and unto the Father. Christ is to us the realisation of righteousness. It is no longer an unattainable conception of an abstract idea which we find it

hard to grasp or to fulfil, but in Him it becomes a concrete fact on which we can lay hold, and a thing which we can appropriate and possess. He becomes first "righteousness," and then "our righteousness"—first the visible, incarnate, and realised exhibition of righteousness, and then something of which we can claim possession and in which we can participate.

II. If this is the obverse presentation or positive statement of the truth, it has also its reverse or negative side. If the name whereby Christ is called is "The Lord our Righteousness," that fact is destructive of all other hopes, prospects, or sources of righteousness; it gives the lie to them and asserts their vanity. No, we can have no righteousness but what we find in the Lord.

S. LEATHES, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 390.

REFERENCES: xxiii. 6.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, Part II., p. 430; Bishop Walsham How, *Plain Words*, p. 292; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 395; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 31; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. vii., p. 261; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 152; S. Leathes, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 305; E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, 2nd series, p. 460.

Chap. xxiii., ver. 28.—"The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord."

I. THE human dream is empty, but the Divine word is substantial. Chaff is a mere husk, but wheat is all grain. So the antagonists of the Bible deal in vague speculations or empty negations, whereas the Scriptures are positive and satisfying.

II. The human dream is destitute of nourishment for man's spiritual nature, while the Divine word is strengthening and ministers to its growth. Chaff does not feed, but wheat gives nutriment. So mere speculation has in it no educating and ennobling influence. It occupies the mind without strengthening the character. The man who indulges in it makes no progress, but, instead of flowing onward with the current, he is caught in some whirling eddy, round which he is continually revolving. But the Christian believer grows. His character is ever gaining new development. He never reaches his ideal, but still "follows after."

III. The human dream has no aggressiveness in it to arrest or overcome the evils that are in the world, but the Divine word is regenerating and reforming. "Is not My word like a fire,

saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"

IV. The human dream is shortlived, but the Divine word is enduring. Chaff is easily blown away, but the wheat remains. And so the "little systems" of human speculation "have their day, and cease to be;" but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. Like some impregnable fortress, in the hollows around which you may pick up specimens of the various missiles which from age to age have been hurled against it, whilst its walls remain unbroken; the Word of God has withstood for centuries the attacks of many successive armies of antagonists. There is deep truth in Beza's motto for the French Protestant Church, which surmounts the device of an anvil surrounded by blacksmiths, at whose feet are many broken hammers:

> "Hammer away, ye hostile bands,
> Your hammers break, God's anvil stands."

W. M. TAYLOR, *Contrary Winds*, p. 21.

REFERENCES: xxiii. 28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 862. xxiii. 29.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 202. xxiii. 35.—J. Hiles Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol, xvi., p. 394. xxiv. 1-3.—T. G. Horton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 149. xxiv. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1206. xxvi. 4-6.—T. Binney, *Good Words*, 1861, p. 300.

Chap. xxvi., ver. 11.—"Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears."

WHY were the Jews so angry with Jeremiah for simply telling them the plain fact of what they did, and what they did not, disguise? Why this unreasonable hatred of the man of God because he pointed to proceedings which were quite open, and which they did not deny? Now, in the first place, when bold, bad men do wicked things which they do not disguise, they do not thereby give the servants of God any permission at all to remind them of them, and make them sensible of the reproach. They will thrust their misdeeds before other people's eyes, but they think their doing this is the very reason why they should not be thrust before their own.

I. This, then, was one chief office which the old prophets had to execute. They had to break down the pride of bold and open vice, where man thought himself privileged to sin;

to do what he pleased to defy God. They had to bring down the haughtiness of man's heart and to make it feel the yoke.

II. Besides the great truth that no man was privileged to sin, there was another great truth the old prophets had to declare, and one opposed to as mischievous an error, viz. the truth that no sin was excused by its commonness. The Jews saw no discord between the true God and idols, but worshipped both together. And so people see no discord or contrariety between the Christian belief and a worldly practice, simply because they are accustomed to both. A worldly life justifies itself in their eyes because it is common; they take it and the Gospel together and interpret the Gospel accordingly. The old prophets were witnesses against this slavery of men to what is common and customary; they recalled them to the purity of truth, they reminded them of the holiness of God's law, and they put before them Almighty God as a jealous God, who disdained to be half-obeyed, and abhorred to be served in common with idols.

J. B. MOZLEY, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 233.

REFERENCE: xxviii. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1032.

Chap. xxix., ver. 10-14.—"For thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform My good word toward you," etc.

I. WE may describe every real affliction which comes upon the Christian as a captivity. To be in a condition which we should never voluntarily have preferred, or to be held back by the power of something which we cannot control, from that which we eagerly desire to do—is not that the very thing in an experience which makes it a trial? This is the case with bodily illness, with business perplexities; sometimes even with providential duties. Every captivity of which the Christian is the victim will have an end. In the fatherland above we shall work without weariness, and serve God without imperfection. So in the prospect of that home we may well be reconciled for a season to the discomforts of our present exile.

II. But while there is much in this view of the case to sustain us, we must not lose sight of the moral end which God has in view in sending us into our captivity. He sees the result from the beginning, and all the afflictions which He sends are but like the hammer-strokes of the sculptor, each of which removes some imperfection or brings some new loveliness

to view. How many of our idolatries He has rebuked and rectified by our captivities! How many portions of His word have been explained to us by our trials! How many of us might say with truth that we had never really prayed till God sent us into captivity.

III. If we would have such results from our captivity, there are certain important things which we must cultivate. I mention: (1) a willing acceptance of God's discipline and patient submission to it; (2) unswerving confidence in God; (3) fervent prayer.

W. M TAYLOR, *The Christian at Work*, June 20th, 1878.

REFERENCES: xxix. 11.—T. Gasquoine, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 403; S. Cox, *Expositions*, 2nd series, p. 434. xxix. 12, 13.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 394. xxix. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1313, and vol. xxv., No. 1457; *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. iii., p. 702. xxx. 11.—*Christian Chronicle*, March 20th, 1884.

Chap. xxx., ver. 17.—"I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord."

IF there is any character more especially marked in the Scripture accounts of Christ's advent among men, it is that of a Restorer. He comes to purify some presupposed corruption, to repair some antecedent ruin, to satisfy some pre-existing wants. It is the feeling of these wants which in the minds of men perpetuates the corresponding feeling of the necessity of remedy which supports the character and claims of Christianity in the world; while, at the same time, it is the slowness of men to embrace with sincerity and practical earnestness the proffered remedy thus felt to be required, and felt to be real, which renders the faith in the crucified Saviour inoperative and unfruitful.

I. The faith in the Christian sacrifice and its attendant revelation of the Divine character alone answer the demands of the heart and reason of man for a higher state of moral perfection. Men do weary of the wickedness of the world as really, though not indeed so frequently, as of its disappointments. The pre-eminent character of our faith is to reveal before our eyes a kingdom wherein immortally dwelleth righteousness. Is not its great sacrifice the corner-stone of the equity of the whole moral universe, the sacrifice that

enables God to be at once just and the Justifier of Him that believeth in Jesus?

II. Christianity offers to maintain a communication between this world and that eternal world of holiness and truth. Here is another want satisfied; the inspiration of weakness made not merely a privilege but a duty. We for ever seek a happiness beyond the reach of chance; Christian prayer beseeches. We seek repose from incessant troubles; Christian prayer is the stillest exercise of soul. We ask even by blind impulses of nature for pardon in the wretched consciousness of depravity. Christian prayer encourages our timidity into confidence.

III. Another particular in which this blessed faith commends itself to our wants, is in its confirmation and direction of that principle of hope which even in our daily and worldly life we are perpetually forced to substitute for happiness. It leaves the tendency, but it alters the object.

IV. But above all its recommendations to the wants and solicitudes of man, the Gospel commends itself by the adorable object which it presents to our affections. The devotion with which we are encouraged to regard the great God and Saviour of the New Testament, the affection with which He has contemplated us, create a new and holy and eternal bond of love, such as in its fulness indeed our fallen humanity could never have anticipated, yet such as becomes an answer to many of the profoundest wants of the soul.

W. ARCHER BUTLER, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, 2nd series, p. 133.

REFERENCE: xxx. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1753.

Chap. xxx., ver. 21.—"And I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto Me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto Me? saith the Lord."

THE word Advent means "approach." And after all, what is everything this side of the grave but "approaches?" We approach to hope, we approach to love, we approach to serve, we approach to being—all life is an approach, and perhaps heaven itself will be a never-ending, but an ever-satisfying, approach to the Father.

I. But the first thought with which I have to deal, is the marvel that there should be the possibility of any approach at all between two things so alienated, so separate, so very wide asunder, as a pure holy God, who dwells in light, and that

dark, vile thing, a human heart. To show how that possibility was brought about, and then how the capability was to be used and turned into fact, that is the aim and the substance of all revelation.

II. Christ's first advent to the earth made other advents possible. (1) There is an advent, when some providence, importunate in its strength, knocks at the door of a man's heart, and a still whisper in his soul tells a presence, and a cord of love draws his affections. (2) There is an advent when God fulfils His own promise, and comes and dwells in a man and takes up His abode in him. (3) There is an advent, when every object we look at in nature and every mercy we taste in providence everywhere, brings God nearer and nearer to a man's mind. (4) There is an advent when Christ shall come in His glory, and bring with Him all His saints. But not one of these advents—of Him to us, or of us to Him—could have been if Christ had not come first to this earth to roll away the barrier. Flesh was the veil that shut the sanctuary, till His pierced body became the veil rent, and the Shechinah shone beyond the circumference of its limits, and it was free to every man to go in and out.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, p. 219.

REFERENCES: xxx. 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1673. xxxi. 1.—J. G. Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 211.

Chap. xxxi., ver. 3.—"The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

I. DIVINE love is a fact; there can be no doubt of the teaching of the Scripture on this subject. The God of the Bible is a God of love, He is a Father in heaven. He cares for us, He watches over us, He guides us, He saves us. This attitude of Divine love is the very core of the Gospel. It may be said to encounter two obstacles within us: our fears at times, and then, what seems the very opposite, our pride and self-confidence. (1) The instinct of conscious guilt is fear, and when the sense of sin is strongly awakened we are apt to turn away from God, and to feel as if God must hate us. But God never hates us. He hates our sins and will punish those sins. But in the very hatred of those sins there is the reality of Divine love. (2) Not only does our fear sometimes turn us away from the thought of God, but our self-sufficiency. We feel as if the powers of nature were strong in us, and the sense of sin dies

down; we feel as if God would overlook our sins, and that we are not so sinful after all; we feel as if we might trust to His goodness, as if it were, so to speak, good nature. But this is equally inconsistent with true spiritual experience. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

II. God not only loves us; He loves us everlastingly. The fact of Divine love is not only sure in itself, it is never uncertain in incidence. Whatever appearance there may seem to the contrary, it is still there. The voice of God is not still because man does not hear it, and the love of God is not gone because man does not feel it. It is still crying to us; it abides as an everlasting fact. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

III. The love of God is individual; it is personal; it is the love of one loving heart to another; it is no mere impersonal conception of supreme benevolence; it is the love of a father to a child, the love of a mother to a daughter; it would not be love otherwise, for it is a distinguishing idea of love that it discriminates its object. "With lovingkindness have I drawn thee." J. TULLOCH, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 209.

REFERENCES: xxxi. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxiii., No. 1914; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, pp. 60, 355; S. Martin, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 5th series, No. vii.; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 153.

Chap. xxxi., ver. 12.—"Their soul shall be as a watered garden."

I. A WATERED garden suggests the idea of fragrant freshness. The prophet was contrasting the weary, dusty, withered aspect of Israel during the exile, with the fresh, bright, happy look of a recovered and ransomed nation. The characters and lives of the people of God ought to be marked by a similar freshness. Godliness tends to keep the soul from withering, and replenishes the springs of the deepest life. There is a perennial freshness in unselfish affections and unworldly aims. The "eternal life" never grows old. It is selfishness that fatigues the spirit, and robs it of its freshness; but so long as a human soul is pervaded by the love of God and the love of man, the human life cannot, for that soul, altogether lose its zest.

II. A "watered garden" suggests the idea of a varied beauty. In a well-kept garden there is beauty of colour and of form; beauty of order and of tasteful arrangement; beauty of stem and leaf and flower; and amongst the flowers themselves a varied beauty, resulting from manifold varieties of form and

colour. And even so the characters and lives of the people of God ought to be marked by that which is attractive and sweet to look upon. There is need that men be attracted by the "beauty of holiness." There are times when a man may get more good from the flowers of the garden than even from its fruits. The lovelier features of the Christian character have their own peculiar charm and peculiar power.

III. A watered garden suggests the idea of a rich fruitfulness. A gardener generally expects, not only flower and blossom, but also fruit, as the outcome of his toil. And certainly the lives of God's people ought to be marked by a fruitfulness which ministers to the welfare and happiness of humanity. Israel was placed under a special culture for the glory of God, and for the benefit of the nations. And "herein," says Christ to His disciples, "is My Father glorified that ye bear much fruit."

F. CAMPBELL FINLAYSON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 72.

REFERENCES: xxxi. 12.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 276. xxxi. 15, 16.—W. Walters, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., No 102. xxxi. 16.—J. N. Norton, *Golden Truths*, p. 234.

Chap. xxxi., ver. 18.—"I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus."

COMPUNCTIOUS visitings and repentant resolutions.

I. I will not enter now into what we may call the more exceptional regrets and remorses of sinful souls. Our Lord touches a different and a more thrilling chord when He makes the wanderer in His utmost destitution, think of the plenty of his home; compare what he might have been with what he is; and say, as he comes to himself, only just this, "How many hired servants of my father's have had enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger?" This is the compunction which I would have to visit us.

II. The Resolution. "I will arise and go to my Father." (1) Mark first how the repentant resolution speaks of God. "My Father." Happy is he, who, in his remotest exile, in his uttermost destitution, still speaks, still thinks, of God as his Father. (2) "*I will arise.*" There is need of exertion. Sit still and thou art bound; sorry, but not contrite; miserable, but not repentant. There is a journey, though it be but in the soul's going, and therefore there must be a rising, a rousing of the whole man, like that, which, in the days of the Son of God below, enabled one whose hand was withered, yet, at the

Divine command, to stand forth and stretch it out. (3) "*I will go.*" Whither and how? (*a*) In prayer. The soul must arise and pray. Say, Father, I have sinned. Say it: He hears. (*b*) Go in effort. We must not trifle with or mock God, and therefore he who would pray must endeavour too. In particular, we must give up resolutely known sins. *Give up your* sin, is the first word of Christ to those who would return to their Father. (*c*) Go in the use of all means. God has furnished us with various means and instruments of access to Him. His Holy Word, public worship, Holy Communion. (*d*) "I will arise and go to my Father." We must get to Him somehow. If we do not get to God Himself, we have done nothing after all.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Voices of the Prophets*, p. 291.

Chap. xxxi., ver. 18.—"I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn Thou me and I shall be turned; for Thou art the Lord my God."

I. HUMAN life is established upon a disciplinary basis.

II. The value of discipline depends upon its right acceptance.

III. Application. (1) There is a yoke in sin. (2) There is a yoke in goodness. God helps the true yoke-bearer.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 369; see also *Pulpit Notes*, p. 177.

REFERENCES: xxxi. 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 743. xxxi. 29.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1645. xxxi. 31-34.—A. B. Bruce, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. x., p. 65.

Chap. xxxii., ver. 27.—"I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me?"

THIS is God's account of Himself.

I. *I am.* Individuality.

II. I am the *Lord.* Dominion and majesty.

III. The God of all flesh. Universality, condescension; not only the God of mighty spirits, but the God of infirm and dying flesh.

IV. Is anything too hard for Me? Distrust rebuked, prayer encouraged, completeness guaranteed.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 61; see also *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. v., p. 605.

REFERENCES: xxxii. 27.—J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 57. xxxii. 39.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1623. xxxii. 41.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 265.

Chap. xxxiii., ver. 3.—"Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."

I. JEHOVAH, our God, has access to us everywhere.

II. Jehovah, our God, can speak to us whenever He pleases, and He does speak to us.

III. God wills to be prayed unto; to be asked to give that which we desire and need.

IV. God pledges Himself to answer prayer.

V. God promises to exceed all we can ask or think.

S. MARTIN, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 161.

REFERENCES: xxxiii. 3.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 154; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 619; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 253; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 282. xxxiii. 9.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1636. xxxv. 5, 6.—F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 257. xxxv. 6, 19.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 275. xxxv. 14.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 34; G. Moberly, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 271.

Chap. xxxv., vers. 18, 19.

THE Rechabites are introduced into the Word of God to reprove bad men in the Church, by contrasting them with good men out of the Church.

I. The popular criticism upon the Church is true: "Better men are out of it than some men in it."

II. The contrast between apostates in the Church and good men out of it is an exception to the general fact.

III. The concessions which Christians make to cynical critics of the Church need often to be qualified by loyalty to the brotherhood.

IV. The virtues of good men, who are not Churchmen, are due largely to the salutary influence of the Church upon them.

V. While God blesses goodness and the truth wherever He finds them, He still depends for them chiefly from the Church which He has created for all time.

VI. These principles suggest that heaven is full of surprises for those who reach it.

A. PHELPS, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 201.

REFERENCES: xxxv., 1 8 19.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 84.

Chap. xxxvi., ver. 23.—"And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth."

I. THE case of the Rechabites is the extreme of obedience; the story of Jehoiakim's burning the roll represents the extreme of disobedience. Between these two cases, thus brought into contrast with one another, almost within the same page, the conduct of the great mass of mankind is always hovering. Few equal the extreme of obedience set forth on the one hand, as few the extreme of disobedience set forth on the other. Thousands who disobey the Bible every day would shrink from the thought of burning it in utter defiance. Thousands who will do what they see to be just and reasonable will make no scruple of breaking a command which seems to them, in its own nature, indifferent.

II. That we are almost all of us, old and young, wanting in the principle of obedience, might be concluded pretty surely from the simple fact that we do not like the very word. The word "independence," which is the opposite to obedience, is, on the contrary, a great favourite with us; we consider that it is at once delightful and honourable. Tracing this up to its origin, it is certainly in part, nothing but evil; for it is made up largely of pride, and pride is ignorance of God. What is called the feeling of independence, is admired chiefly because it shows the absence of fear. But if obedience were rendered, not from fear, but from principle, it would then be nobler, because it would imply greater self-denial than the feeling of independence; for the feeling of independence is, in other words, a wish to have our own way, a wish in which there is nothing at all noble or admirable, except in as far as it is exercised in the face of the fear of danger. Set aside the existence of fear, and independence becomes no better than self-will; while obedience becomes self-denial for the sake of others—that is benevolence or charity.

III. There can be no obedience to God without virtue and duty, but the word implies something more; it implies doing our duty because God commands it; it implies a deep and abiding sense of our relation to Him; that we are not, nor ever can be, independent beings but dependent creatures; and that, by practising obedience to our Maker, by doing His will because it is His will, and because we love Him, we shall be

raised to a higher and more endearing name; no longer creatures, but children.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 210.

Chap. xxxvi., ver. 23.—"He cut it with the penknife."

I. WHY has God given us the Bible? Not to bewilder us, not to tempt our curiosity, not to found rival sects, but to bring us to Himself to obtain forgiveness of iniquity and sin. The one object of the Bible is the salvation of mankind.

II. Man is so unwilling to hear anything unpleasant or disagreeable about himself that he gets into a wrong temper before he actually knows what God's object is. Jehoiakim did not hear the *whole* roll. Did any man ever destroy the Bible who knew it wholly? The difficulty is in the "three or four leaves."

III. Men have not destroyed revelation when they have destroyed the Bible. The penknife cannot reach its spirit, the fire cannot touch its life. The history of the Bible is one of the proofs of its inspiration.

IV. The desire to cut the Bible with the penknife and to cast it into the fire, is quite intelligible, because in a sense profoundly natural.

V. This desire to mutilate the Holy Word shows itself in various ways, some of them apparently innocent; others of them dignified with fine names, and claiming attention as the last developments of human progress. Human nature shows itself most vividly in the treatment of the Bible.

PARKER, *The Ark of God*, p. 217; see also *Penny Pulpit*, No. 899.

NOTICE some lessons which this subject suggests.

I. Those who in their early days have resisted holy influences, generally turn out the most wicked of men. When a man deliberately tramples on conviction, and resists the dealings of God's spirit, he uses the most effectual means to sear his conscience and harden his heart.

II. If a man's religion is not genuine and heart deep, it often happens that troubles and calamities only drive him further away from God. What effect had all his misfortunes and disasters on Jehoiakim? Did they soften him? Did they incline him to a better course of life? Not a bit. He grew worse than ever.

III. As the heart gets hardened in sin, there is a growing

unwillingness to listen to the voice of God. As soon as a young man begins an evil course, and resolves to take his fill of sinful pleasures, he acquires a hatred of his Bible, and a disinclination to attend the house of God. If he cannot silence God's ministers, he will keep as far as possible from them, and shut his ears against all good counsel.

J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *The City Youth*, p. 225

REFERENCES: xxxvi. 3.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 551. xxxvi. 22, 23.—J. COX, *Expositions*, 2nd series, p. 192. xxxvi. 23.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 231; D. Moore, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3504.

Chap. xxxvi., ver. 24.—"Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words."

THE conduct which we read of in the text seems to be nothing out of the way, nothing strange, nothing which we cannot enter into and cannot explain, but only an instance of what goes on now, and always has gone on since the beginning of the world; it is an instance of the hardening power of sin.

I. This is what makes a sin, even a little sin, enormously great when considered as the seed of the whole crop of sins afterwards, even as a single seed of the wrong kind may be enough to overrun a field with thistles. A single sin is but the leader of a whole band, and when once the barrier has been broken, a legion of others swarm in; and a single sin is but the beginning of the hardening process, is but the beginning of a state of disease which ends in utter blindness and want of feeling. This I understand by the *deceitfulness* of sin to which the Apostle refers its hardening power; it is deceitful because what we call a small sin appears trifling, because we judge of sins merely in ourselves, without considering to what they lead; if in war a general were to see a few of the enemy's soldiers straggling over the hills, he *might* say that they were so few that they were not worth considering, but *would* he say so? or would he not rather look upon them as the forerunners of a great army; would he not prepare at once to resist the hosts of enemies which he must know lurked behind? In like manner the sins of childhood are the forerunners of the great army of the world, the flesh, and the devil, which comes up in maturer years; and the only safe course is to look upon no sin as trifling, but to root out every enemy, whether small or great, lest perhaps

we allow our enemy to gain such strength as shall end in our overthrow.

II. There is such a thing as being gospel-hardened; there is such a thing as listening to God's word, and to preaching, without doing, until the sound of the most solemn truths becomes as useless as that of a tinkling cymbal, until the sword of the Spirit is unable to cut or pierce. Persons who have become thus are like the king of Judah and his servants, who hear the threatened vengeance of Almighty God, and yet are not afraid, nor rend their garments.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 1st series, p. 222.

REFERENCES: xxxvi. 24.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 36; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. i., p. 177.

Chap. xxxvi., ver. 32.—"And there were added besides unto them many like words."

I. BARUCH, the friend and amanuensis of Jeremiah, was directed in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, to write all the prophecies of Jeremiah delivered up to that period, and to read them to the people, which he did, from a window in the Temple, on two solemn occasions. But where was Jeremiah himself? He was under sentence of death, and the people were infuriated against him. He was in so much danger from the animosity of his opponents that it would have been imprudent for him to appear in public. This prudence was indeed one of the marks of Jeremiah's piety, as well as his wisdom. Our life and health are not our own. We are stewards of God, and to Him we are accountable for the preservation of the life which He has given us until the time shall come when He shall Himself take it.

II. Baruch could probably perform the work in hand better than Jeremiah himself. Had Jeremiah appeared in public, the people would have been so exasperated that they would not even have heard him, for he would have come before them as one under sentence of death, and in defiance of the advice of those powerful friends who would by his conduct have been equally with himself exposed to danger. Wisdom and sound policy are parts of piety. We are not only to do the work which is providentially assigned to us, but to do it in the best and most effective manner.

III. Jeremiah foretold destruction to the city unless the people amended their ways. The people did not deny that

Jeremiah was an inspired prophet, but they would not heed what he said, and seemed to think that if they prohibited him from speaking, or if they destroyed his book, they would be exempted from responsibility or danger. But the decree of God remained; the words of Jeremiah were fearfully fulfilled. The fact remains the same, whether we believe it or not. The Bible and the preacher do not alter the fact or make the fact.

W F Hook, *Parish Sermons*, p. 165.

References: xxxvi. 32.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, Part II., p. 176. xxxviii. 6.—J. Kennedy, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 124.

Chap. xxxviii.

Ropes and rags.

I. Help always comes from above. Jeremiah found it so. It was useless to try to climb out of the dungeon,—it was only to fall deeper into the mire. "Salvation is of the Lord." Ebed-melech is only a very poor picture of Jesus. The Saviour does more than send down a rope. He comes Himself and lifts us up.

II. Although Ebed-melech may be a very poor type of Jesus Christ, he is a very good picture of the style in which one man may help another. He had sympathy. His kind heart bled as he thought of the suffering prophet. Sympathy is the mother of help.

III. Ebed-melech did not allow difficulty to deter him. He knew that the enemies of the prophet were unscrupulous, and would not hesitate to cut his throat, but he did not give up because of that. If you mean to help others you will have to pull hard against the stream.

IV. Ebed-melech teaches us to spare the feelings of those we help. The rope of deliverance should not cut the flesh of those we save. We may wound men in helping them, and they may like the remedy less than the disease.

V. Among the practical lessons of this story there is the great truth that one man may set others going. Ebed-melech went to the king for help, and he gave him thirty helpers. "So they drew up Jeremiah." The great mass of people are not original; they can imitate, and if you can show them the way they will follow.

VI. Let us learn the value of despised and cast-off things. The prudent chamberlain had seen "under the treasury the old

cast clouts and old rotten rags." No one else saw any value in them, but he knew where they lay and put them to a good use.

VII. Ebed-melech found out that God pays the best wages.

T. CHAMPNESS, *New Coins from Old God.*

REFERENCES: xxxix. 1, 2.—R. Glover, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 74. xliii.—P. Thomson, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. x. p. 397.

Chap. xliv., ver. 4.—"Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate."

NATURAL indications of God's hatred of sin.

I. There are in this world gigantic tendencies which reveal themselves to our perception only by gentle and slight manifestations. The great magnetic influence which courses over the world will manifest itself to us in making a floating straw, cast loose on still water, gradually turn north and south. The vast tidal wave, that raises the ocean's level for thousands of miles along the coastline, reveals itself by a gradual cease of the ripple of some little brook up among inland cornfields. Now the tremendous truth that God sides with right against wrong, that right will ultimately vanquish and supplant and annihilate wrong, that any wrong-doer is in fact knocking his head against the universe—that truth is made plain to us by gentle indices oftentimes and by little things, and that truth is not much perceived by coarse and bad natures.

II. Yet there are indications. There is—(1) the serious judgment of our own conscience against all wrong, a testimony hardly ever wholly quenched. (2) The effect of many forms of sin in wrecking the health and abridging the life of the transgressor. A life of vice will not be a merry one, but it is likely to be a short one. (3) If you unscrupulously drive to the utmost the capacities of enjoyment that are in us, utter satiety and disgust will come speedily. Those capacities which, used in righteous moderation, yield enjoyment, overdriven bring loathing. (4) All the deeds we do go to strengthen the dispositions and habits from which they spring, forming us into a character from which, good or evil, we cannot escape; and thus already we see that wrong-doing, persevered in, ties the wrong-doer to misery and degradation, always growing more miserable and more degraded. You see at a glance how awful is the outlook here, and how it makes an end of the recreant thought that, after all, the sinner sometimes makes the best at least of this world, and he may make a quite new start

elsewhere, none the worse. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." A. K. H. B., *From a Quiet Place*, p. 140.

WHY does God hate sin?

I. Because it is contrary to His own nature.

II. Because it is unnatural in His creatures.

III. It transgresses holy, just, and good laws.

IV. It defiles and injures the entire human nature.

V. It makes men curses to each other.

VI. It ignores or rejects the Divine government.

VII. Wherever sin exists, except as it is checked by God's mercy, it has the dominion.

VIII. Wherever sin is introduced, it spreads.

IX. Sin requires God to inflict upon men of every class and kind, that which He assures us, upon His oath, He has no pleasure in.

X. Men's continuing in sin tramples under foot the blood of Jesus.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 2nd series, No. 8.

REFERENCES: xliv. 4.—W. M. Taylor, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 248; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 24; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 235. xliv. 29, 30.—P. Thomson, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. x., p. 397. xlv. 5.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 293. xlv.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, 2nd series, p. 205. xlvi. 17.—*Christian Chronicle*, March 27th, 1884.

Chap. xlviii., ver. 11.—"Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed."

THE principle that underlies the text is this: that we require to be unsettled in life by many changes and interruptions of adversity, in order to be most effectually loosened from our own wills, and prepared to do the will and work of God.

Observe—

I. How God manages, on a large scale, in the common matters of life, to keep us in a process of change, and prevent our lapsing into a state of security, such as we desire. Nature herself conspires to loosen all our calculations—meeting us with her frosts, her blastings, her droughts, her storms, her fevers; and forbidding us ever to be sure of that for which we labour. The very scheme of life appears to be itself a grand decanting process, where change follows change, and all are emptied from vessel to vessel.

II. The radical evil of human character, as being under sin, consists in a determination to have our own way; which determination must be somehow reduced and extirpated. Sin is but another name for self-direction. If we could stand on our lees, in continual peace and serenity—if success were made secure, subject to no change or surprise—what, on the other hand, should we do more certainly than stay by our evil mind, and take it as a matter of course that our will is to be done; the very thing above all others of which we most need to be cured?

III. Consider the fact that our evils are generally hidden from us till they are discovered to us by some kind of adversity. If God should let us be as Moab from our youth, then we should be as Moab in the loss of all valuable improvement.

IV. It is another point of advantage in the changes and surprises through which we are continually passing, that we are prepared, in this manner, for gracious and refining work of the Spirit in us.

V. Great quiet and security, long continued, are likely to allow the reaction or the recovered power of our old sins, and must not therefore be suffered. As the wine, standing on its dregs or lees contracts a taste from the lees, and must, therefore, be decanted or drawn off; so we, in like manner, need to be separated from everything appertaining to the former life, to be broken up in our expectations, and loosened from the affinities of our former habit.

H. BUSHNELL, *The New Life*, p. 392.

WE may lay it down as a principle of universal application that a man needs to be frequently disturbed and displaced by the dispensations of God's providence, if he would grow in all the elements of that greatness which consists in holiness. To remain "at ease," to "settle on the lees," is fatal to spiritual advancement.

I. Consider what there is in these "emptyings" that fits them to promote our spiritual advancement. (1) It is obvious that such dispensations have in them an influence which is well calculated to reveal us to ourselves. It was a shrewd remark of Andrew Fuller, that "a man has only as much religion as he can command in the day of trial;" and if he have no religion at all, his trouble will make that manifest to him. (2) The frequent unsettlements which come upon us in God's providence have a tendency to shake us out of ourselves. The essence of sin is self-preference. We will take our own

way rather than God's. We will make our own plans, as if only ourselves were to be consulted. Now, what a corrective to this idolatry of self is administered by these providential dispensations, which, coming as all such things do, unexpectedly, unsettle all our engagements, disarrange all our plans, and disappoint all our calculations. By many bitter failures we are made to acknowledge that "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," and then by the Spirit of God we are led up to confidence in Jehovah. (3) These frequent unsettlements have a tendency to keep us from being wedded to the world, or from thinking of rooting ourselves permanently here.

II. Notice the particular qualities of character which providential unsettlements are most calculated to foster. (1) Purity of motive and conduct. (2) Strength either for endurance or action. (3) Sympathy and charity.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Limitations of Life*, p. 358.

REFERENCES: xlviii. 11, 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 761. xlviii. 28.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 75. xlix. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1085. xlix. 23.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 253; J. B. Heard, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 241.

Chap. xlix., vers. 30, 31.—"Dwell deep . . . dwell without care . . . dwell alone."

I. "DWELL deep." Have great principles as the base of your character; have root in yourselves; see that you are not mere waifs and strays, the sport of every wind, but that you have laid hold of the very substance of life so firmly that not even storms may be able to shatter or destroy your being. Depth of life is not mystery of life; it is not unreasoning hope; it is intelligence, it is faith, it is reality. No life can be deep that is not truly religious. Religion leads us to the infinite; it challenges our strongest powers; it lures even weakness itself towards might and courage; it speaks the word of hope and inspiration when we imagine that our whole task is exhausted. To dwell in Christ is to dwell deeply.

II. "Dwell without care." We may accept this exhortation in two different yet coincident senses. We are not to dwell carelessly, yet are not to dwell fearfully; our independence of care is to arise from trust in the love and sufficiency of God. It is possible to dwell without care, simply because we undervalue life; it is possible to dwell without care, because we hold life in subjection to the Divine will and in perfect confidence in Divine love. Our care begins and ends with God. We must

be right with Him. To be right with God is to sit upon His throne, and to view the affairs of life as God views them; to regard them in their entirety and to be superior to their influence. The uncarefulness to which the Christian is called is an expression of profound trust in his heavenly Father.

III. "Dwell alone. By this exhortation is not intended a call to hermitic seclusion, to misanthropy, to churlish loneliness, or the like. Yet it may be so interpreted as to make its application of the most excellent advantage to us. Solitude is needful to the highest culture of life. When we seek to be alone, it should be that our view of the Father may be more distinct and impressive. We must never seek for the loneliness which shuns the Divine Presence, for if we find it we find the devil clothed in redoubled power. Beware of Godless solitude; it is as the very gate of hell.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1870, p. 341.

REFERENCE: l. 4, 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1752.

Chap. l., ver. 5.—"They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward."

THOSE who would make their future different from the past must cultivate two things; first, the spirit of inquiry; secondly, a spirit of determination.

I. Like these Israelites—for the words are written figuratively—we have been going "from mountain to hill," that is, from one form of idol worship to another, till we have forgotten our resting-place. There is but one resting-place for the creature, and that is the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ, apprehended by the soul, fled to, clung to, trusted. They who would find rest must find it in God. There is always something beautiful in the spirit of inquiry. The very face of the inquirer shines. That kindling of the eye as a man listens—the man who has a thirst for knowledge—the man whose soul is set on finding its way into some new region of science, or into some new joy, is a touching sight to the looker-on; and it is an inspiring influence to the teacher who feels that he has a message. Of all inquiries the way to Zion is first and foremost. Whatever form inquiry takes, this is its meaning. Even intellectual inquiry is often either the escape from, or a substitute for, this. We all believe in a hereafter—in a heaven; the way to it is our question.

II. But it is not immaterial to find it added, that they who

ask the way to Zion must also have their faces thitherward. The spirit of inquiry must be also the spirit of resolution and determination. For there is an inquiry about the way which is all speculation. There may even be a questioning about the way to Zion with the back turned upon it, instead of the face. There once was a rich young man who said to Jesus Christ: "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" but when the terrible words came, "Go and sell . . . . come and follow," then he went away sorrowful. There was inquiry, but there was no determination. He asked the way to Zion, but his face was not thitherward.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 17.

REFERENCES: l. 5.—*Preacher's Lantern*, vol. i., p. 258. l. 23.—E. P. Hood, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 193.

Chap. l., ver. 34.—"Their Redeemer is strong; the Lord of hosts is His name: He shall throughly plead their cause."

AMONG the remarkable provisions of the Mosaic law there were some very peculiar ones affecting the next-of-kin. The nearest living blood-relation to a man had certain obligations and offices to discharge under certain contingencies, in respect of which he received a special name, and which is sometimes translated in the Old Testament "Redeemer," and sometimes "Avenger" of blood. In the text Jehovah is represented as having taken upon Himself the functions of the next-of-kin, and is the Kinsman-Redeemer of His people.

I. Notice, first, the qualifications and offices of the "Goel." The qualifications may be all summed up in one—that he must be the nearest living blood-relation of the person whose Goel he was. His offices were three. The first was connected with property (Lev. xxv. 25, Revised Version). The second was to buy back a member of his family fallen into slavery. The third was to avenge the blood of a murdered relative.

II. Notice the grand mysterious transference of this office to Jehovah. This singular institution was gradually discerned to be charged with lofty meaning and to be capable of being turned into a dim shadowing of something greater than itself. You will find that God begins to be spoken of in the later portions of Scripture as the Kinsman-Redeemer. I reckon eighteen instances, of which thirteen are in the second half of Isaiah. The reference is, no doubt, mainly to the great deliverance from captivity in Egypt and Babylon, but the thought sweeps a much wider circle and goes much deeper down

than these historical facts. There was in it some faint apprehension of the deeper sense in which it was true that God is the next-of-kin to every soul, and ready to be its Redeemer.

III. We have the perfect fulfilment of this Divine office by the man Christ Jesus. Christ is our Kinsman. He is doubly of kin of each soul of man, both because in His true manhood He is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and because in His divinity He is nearer to us than the closest human kindred can ever be. By both He comes so near to us that we may clasp Him by our faith, and rest upon Him, and have Him for our nearest Friend; our Brother. Because He is man's Kinsman He buys back His enslaved brethren; He brings us back our squandered inheritance, which is God. He will keep our lives under His care, and be ready to plead our cause.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, Aug. 20th, 1885.

REFERENCES: li. 50.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 285. li. 51.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 231.

Chap. lii., vers. 8-11.—"But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him," etc.

OF the many truths which the passage before us teaches, the mysterious intervolution of the plans of God with the plans of men will seem to some minds the most impressive.

I. The enclosure of the plans of men within the plans of God is such that commonly men appear to be left very much to themselves.

II. In leaving men to themselves in the forming and working of their own plans, Divine control does not prevent the occurrence of very shocking catastrophes.

III. Yet the plans of God envelop and use the plans of men with more than motherly tenderness for every man, every woman, every child.

IV. The interlacing of the plans of God with the plans of man goes far towards explaining the mystery of shocking and exceptional calamity. Suffering is God's great remedial antithesis to sin.

V. The interworking of the plans of God with the plans of men suggests the only true method of happy as well as holy living. It is to make our plans one with God's plans.

A. PHELPS, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 215.

REFERENCE: lii. 11.—J. Kennedy, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 140.

LAMENTATIONS.

REFERENCES: i. 12.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. ix., p. 102; J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 183; W. L. Onslow, *Church Sermons by Eminent Clergymen*, vol. i., p. 321; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1620; E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, 2nd series, p. 205. ii. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 59; S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 191. iii. 5.—J. Foster, *Lectures*, 1st series, p. 306. iii. 16.—T. Hooke, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 325. iii. 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 654; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 149.

Chap. iii., vers. 22, 23.—**"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness."**

THIS is one of those very bright thoughts which lie across this dark book like an April ray upon a retiring cloud. There is no book in the Bible which is more characterised by the illuminations of sorrow.

I. We are come, by God's grace, to a new year.* We may be very thankful that there are these periods and epochs in life—these foldings down of pages we have read and openings of the new leaves of another chapter. They equip us, they give point and definiteness to new intention, they offer fresh feelings, they take us out of grooves, they stir up in us our immortality.

II. But there are things newer than the year. They were before the year; they were before all years; they will outlive the year. The year will grow stale, but these will always sustain their vigour and elasticity. When we think of the future we always see it in a mass; but it will not come in a mass, but in multitudes of little bits. We see a mountain, it will come in grains of sand. Each day will have a duty, a trial, a temptation, a strength, a joy. And every morning, as we arise, we shall wake to meet new mercies, newer than the dawn. They will be new as God makes new—the old renovated; the happy associations of an old thing combined with the spring-like delight of a new thing. They are new: (1) because they were forfeited

* Preached on first Sunday of the year.

yesterday by our sins; (2) because new light is thrown upon them, and our hearts have been renewed to see them better; (3) because they can be dedicated anew, used for new services and new love; (4) because of the "night of heaviness," which endureth but for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 11th series, p. 13.

TAKING the opening of the chapter along with the text, we seem to find a good deal of inconsistency—and, in fact, positive contradiction. Spiritual experience must be looked at as a whole. One side is very dark and full of sadness, sharply inclined towards despair; the other is brighter than the summer morning, tuneful, sunned with all the lustre of saintly hope. So we must take the night with the morning, if we would have the complete day. Taking Jeremiah's experience as a whole, what do we find that sanctified sorrow had wrought in him?

I. In the first place, it gave him a true view of Divine government. Jeremiah was brought to understand two things about the government of God: (1) that it was tender; (2) that it was minute.

II. Jeremiah gives us two notions about human discipline as regulated by God the Judge and God the Father. (1) He tells us the goodness of waiting: it is good for a man to wait. A determination to go, yet a willingness to stand still—that is the mystery of true waiting. (2) It is good for a man to bear the yoke. Commend me to the man who has been through deep waters, through very dark places, through treacherous, serpent-haunted roads, and who has yet come out with a cheerful heart, mellow, chastened, subdued, and who speaks tenderly of the mercy of God through it all. That man I may trust with my heart's life.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 61; see also *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. i., p. 638.

I. THERE is no greater evil committed by any of us than a practical forgetfulness of the *common* mercies of life: mercies, which because of their commonness, cease to be regarded as mercies. The Psalmist calls upon us to "forget not all God's benefits," and he thus indicates our perpetual danger, a danger which he himself felt, and against which he had to guard his own soul. There are two great causes which may be said to account for our forgetfulness of the mercies of God, which are new every morning. The first is that the hand of the Giver is invisible;

and the second is that they come to us with such marvellous regularity.

II. Notice a few of the common mercies which we are most prone to forget: (1) Take, as the first illustration, sleep. There are thousands who never kneel down and thank God for sleep. I do not think that any man who finds sleep an easy thing has ever calculated rightly its inestimable value. It is when pain or overwork chases sleep away, when he lies upon his bed and waits for its coming but it comes not, when he begins to dread the nights lest he should have the same wretched experiences again and again—a fear which prepares the way for its own fulfilment—it is then that he begins to learn what is meant by sleep, and what high rank it takes among the common mercies of life. It is a mercy which no money can buy, which no rank can command. (2) Our reason. When we consider how closely the reason is allied with the brain and with the whole nervous system, it is a surprising circumstance that insanity is not a more widespread evil than it is. The possession of reason should stir us up to daily thanksgiving to Him whose mercies are new to us every morning. (3) The power of motion and action, and speech, is another mercy which is new every morning. We live not upon old mercies, but upon new ones fresh from the Divine hand, fresh from the Divine heart.

E. MELLOR, *The Hem of Christ's Garment*, p. 138.

REFERENCES: iii. 24.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 451; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 321.

Chap. iii., ver. 25.—"The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him."

THROUGHOUT the Scriptures the two terms, seeking and waiting, run parallel as describing prayer, earnest and effectual prayer, in all its acts and offices. The command to seek the Lord and the command to wait on the Lord have the same general meaning, and the same general promises are given to each. But in this passage they are for once combined; their combination suggesting a certain difference between them and the perfection of devotion which results from their union.

I. Generally in the combination of these two terms, each expresses the perfection of all prayer as it is either the active seeking of God or the passive waiting for Him; in other words, what man does and what he must expect God to do in the whole business of devotion. All communion with God requires this.

II. Again, the seeking stands here and everywhere for the pleading boldness of prayer, which requires to be qualified by its waiting humility.

III. The two terms signify the fervour and earnestness of prayer joined to persistency in that fervour; and the rare combination of these gives the highest character to the tone of our devotion. The waiting habit is as constantly commended to us as the seeking: (1) as the test of real earnestness, and (2) as its stimulant.

IV. The two words may be applied to the confidence and submission of prayer as it has to do with the seeking and waiting for special blessings. (1) This union of confidence and submission will dispose us to pray for temporal good and earthly deliverances with entire submission to the will of God; confident that we are heard, but leaving the answer to His wisdom. (2) This is true also of spiritual requests. We must plead for them, and yet learn in waiting the reason why they are withheld. They are granted in an indirect manner, and in the discipline of graces more important than the gifts themselves.

V. The combination of seeking and waiting forms in its highest perfection the devotional state of the soul in which both the seeking and the waiting go beyond their former meanings, and blend into the habit rather than the act of communion with God.

W. B. Pope, *Sermons, Addresses, and Charges*, p. 155.

Chap. iii., ver. 26.—"It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."

I. The first thing is to understand what is meant by "the salvation of the Lord." The salvation of the Lord here is something else than the first view which a sinful man obtains of pardon and peace, through "the great God our Saviour." It is the salvation which a man needs in any crisis of life, where he suffers under trial or is threatened with it. And, in those trials, hope and quiet waiting do not come at once into their fullest exercise. As long as human means can avail, it is a man's duty, trusting to Divine help, to employ them. The salvation of the Lord is when all conceivable means have been employed and have failed.

II. The second thing is to consider what is meant by these exercises of the soul towards God's salvation, "to hope and quietly to wait." (1) Hope: (*a*) The foundation of hope may be said to lie in desire. It differs from desire in this, that

desire pursues many things that can never be objects of hope to us. We can only hope for that which is felt to be possible and reasonable. This, then, is the first thing for us to do, if we would strengthen hope, to see that its objects are right and good—that is, accordant with the Divine will and beneficial for us; we may learn this by consulting God's word and our own thoughtful experience. (*b*) The next element in Christian hope is faith. Hope differs from faith in this, that we believe in many things in regard to which we do not hope. Hope is faith with desire pointing out the objects. (*c*) There is a third element to be added to make our hope strong—that of imagination. (2) "Quiet waiting," or patience. It is the part of hope to seek the future; it is the duty of patience to rest calmly in the present and not to fret. Patience is strengthened (*a*) by faith, (*b*) by contentment, (*c*) by calm attention to duties.

III. Consider the benefit of uniting these—"It is good *both* to hope and quietly to wait." (1) The one is needful to save the other from sinking into sin. (2) The one is needful to raise the other to its full strength. We shall find increasingly, "how good it is." (*a*) It is good now in the depth of the soul—in the conscious assurance that it is better to rest in the hardest of God's ways than to wander at will in our own. (*b*) We shall find how good it is in the enhancement of every blessing for which we have to wait.

J. KER, *Sermons*, p. 347.

Chap. iii., ver. 27.—"It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth."

I. IT is good for a man to bear in his youth the yoke of subjection to authority. If he does not learn this lesson early, he will suffer for it by-and-by.

II. It is good for a man to bear in his youth the yoke of self-restraint. It is not enough to be under the rule of others. Let such authority be ever so great, there is still a sphere to which it cannot extend, and in which there is scope for a man's own conscience to assert its command. There are, with all of us, desires and tendencies which we have sternly to resist, and the denying of which is part of the training by which we are fitted for a noble and useful life.

III. It is good for a man to bear in his youth the yoke of difficulty and toil. It is good for us all to have to work for our bread. Our Creator intended us for labour, not for indolence. Even before the fall, man had his physical work assigned to

him. God placed him not in a "sleeping hollow" to fatten in idleness; but in a large garden, to dress it and to keep it.

IV. It is good for a man to bear in his youth the yoke of living godliness. It is to this that our blessed Saviour invites us when He says, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me." It is good for a man to become a decided Christian in early life.

V. It is good for a man to bear in his youth the yoke of a public Christian profession. The first thing is to be a Christian; the next thing is to avow it.

VI. It is good for a man to bear in his youth the yoke of Christian service. It will help your own faith wonderfully to be engaged in some real labour for the Lord.

VII. It is good for a man to bear in his youth the yoke of personal affliction. There is a marked want about those Christians who have never suffered. You will rarely see piety of a rich and mellow tone in a man who has known nothing of sorrow.

J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *Forewarned—Forearmed*, p. 19.

I. THERE is, first, the yoke of home. Woe to that home which lays no yoke upon its inmates. That is the very office of the family toward its young and inexperienced members. To turn the current of the young life into a right channel—to make good habitual by use, and (to that end) to insist upon conformity to a good rule—to require, as the condition of maintenance, as the condition of protection, as the condition of life, that this and not that shall be the conduct and the speech and the temper, and (down to very minute particulars) the mode of living,—this is the duty of a home, in order that it may bring after it God's assigned and certain blessing. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth—the yoke of home.

II. But the home must at last send out its sons and its daughters into a rougher school of experience, and the half-way house on this journey is first the school with its discipline, and then the more special training for a particular profession or trade. Here too there is a yoke, and a yoke-bearing, or else a refusal of the yoke, with many sad consequences of sorrow and shame.

III. Many persons suffer seriously throughout their life by not having borne in their youth the yoke of a church.

IV. There is One who uses this very figure concerning His

own Divine office. "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me."

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. iv., p. 432.

REFERENCES: iii. 27.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 205; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1291 iii. 31-33.—J. Burton, *Christian Life and Truth*, p. 368.

Chap. iii., ver. 39.—"Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?"

THIS question suggests two considerations; each of which demonstrates the injustice of the complaint—Why should a living man complain? A living man! Life is still left thee; and of whatsoever thou hast been stripped, there is such a counterpoise in the continuance of life that complaint must be groundless. "*A man for the punishment of his sins.*" There hath nothing befallen thee save the just recompense of thy misdoing. How can a complaint against justice be itself just. Thus are these two arguments of the text demonstrative of the unfairness of human complaint when the dealings of the Most High pass under review. These two arguments we will apply (1) to God's general dealings; (2) to His individual.

I. How easy and how common it is to discourse in a querulous and reproachful strain, on the fact of our being made to suffer for a forefather's transgressions, and on the fact of our deriving a polluted nature from guilt in which personally we took not any share. We forget, that although we did not ourselves elect Adam to act as our representative, we should, almost beyond doubt, have elected him, had it been put to our choice. For there was an infinitely greater probability that Adam, with the fate of millions committed to his keeping, would have watched diligently against the assaults of temptation, than that any lonely individual of his descendants, left to obey for himself and disobey for himself, should have maintained his allegiance and preserved his fidelity. In appointing mankind to stand or fall in Adam, God dealt with them by a measure of the widest benevolence. If so, complaint is at once removed by the second consideration which our text suggests. If there was nothing unjust in God's appointing Adam to act as our representative, then there is nothing inconsistent either with the strictest justice or the amplest benevolence in our being accounted to have sinned in Adam.

II. Consider the application of the text to the complaints called forth by individual affliction. (1) Our text represents

affliction as a punishment, not of this sin, or of that sin, but generally for the punishment of man's sins. Therefore the complaint is to be met not by any demonstration that by one particular line of conduct the complaining individual has brought down a particular judgment, but simply by the fact of general sinfulness. When you remember that man is a transgressor, not only by imputation, but by every positive and personal working of evil, surely the marvel must be, not that so much of wormwood should drug the cup of human life, but that so much of sweetness should still have been left. (2) We are living men. And whatever the woe and bitterness of our portion, wherefore should living men complain? Life, when regarded as the seedtime of eternity, must appear to be so enormous in value that its sternest and most aggravated sorrows dwindle away into comparative nothingness. While man has life, he may win Christ. If it be a life of sickness, a life of widowhood, a life of captivity, yet all this deserves no mention in opposition to the privilege of existence. Life protracted may be a season when the Saviour is won, and the Saviour won is the universe our own.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2216.

Chap. iii., ver. 40.—"Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord."

THE prophet calls his countrymen to a work to which they needed to be exhorted and pressed; and well he might do so, for the work of self-examination is not at all an agreeable work. Some religious works are agreeable; for example, the meditation on God's goodness, and the benefits He has bestowed upon us. "A joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful." But it is not a joyful and pleasant thing to consider closely our own way, and see how we have behaved ourselves towards our good and gracious Father who is on high.

I. The work of self-examination has this advantage, that it is a real, personal act; and in religion, as has been well-observed, what a man does for himself is of much more avail than what others do or can do for him. In self-examination each man is his own minister; and Christ, who is above, the only Priest.

II. Self-examination is a private work. What a man is in private, that he *is*; and it is in the personal interviews with our Maker that the critical transactions of our religious history are performed.

III. Self-examination is a rehearsing of the judgment day,

for it is a having the soul up before conscience, and conscience is God's voice in the heart. There we are before the throne of God by anticipation, that throne before which the man found without the wedding-garment, when questioned why he has it not, is speechless. Without repentance we shall perish, and repentance absolutely requires and supposes a careful review of the actions of our life, and that at stated and oft-recurring periods, so that the actions may be remembered and not slip through, from the length of time through which the review extends and the difficulty of recalling its performances.

IV. The practice of self-examination will more assuredly soften and humanise the character in regard of the social intercourses of life; making him who is diligent in such practice gentle and merciful toward his fellow-creatures.

V. The self-examiner is a profitable attendant in the services of the church. Having considered his ways, he knows what he has to confess when he comes into his Maker's presence.

C. P. EDEN, *Oxford Lent Sermons*, 1859, p. 241

REFERENCE: iii. 40.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 90.

Chap. iii., ver. 41.—"Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens."

THERE are two things which often divert men from appealing to God. First, their own efforts on behalf of themselves; and secondly, the appeal to their fellows. But this appeal to God, this lifting up of our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens, may co-exist with effort, with activity, with diligence, with prudence, with the devout pursuit of an object, and with the right use of the strength, the talents, and the resources of our fellow-men and of our fellow-Christians. We owe an appeal to God on whatever concerns us.

I. The throne of God. It is the Lord who reigns *in* all circumstances, and He reigns *over* them. If we do not recognise this we are disloyal, we set up some false god, we are guilty of the sin of idolatry, we break the first and chief commandment in His holy law.

II. We owe an appeal on whatsoever concerns us to the personal providence of God, and the actual government of God. For the superintendence of our affairs is not committed by God to some deputy. He Himself provides, and He Himself rules.

III. We owe it, further, to the character of God. Think of His complete knowledge, His consummate wisdom, His eternal

love. He gives you of Himself and of His resources as though you were His only son, and His heart is love towards you.

IV. An appeal to God is due to the paternity of God.

V. We owe this appeal to God's provision for our full reconciliation to Himself.

VI. We owe it to the Divine precepts, invitations, and promises.

VII. We owe it to ourselves to make this appeal to God.

VIII. We owe it to each other. Supposing that you are ready thus to appeal, there are two evils to be guarded against: (1) That of lifting up the spirit without the hands—depending upon mental prayer without times for prayer, seasons for prayer, words of prayer—without an act of prayer. (2) That of lifting up the hands without the heart. Here is the danger of forms and modes. Do you not sometimes come from the place of prayer with the guilty consciousness that you have not prayed. Try to let the mode in which you speak to God be born of your present circumstances and of the state of your heart towards God. Get time, if it be only a few moments, for meditation before you speak to God, and you will find a freshness in your thought of Him which will certainly inspire and help your supplications.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 1st series, **No. 15.**

REFERENCES: iii. 41.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 4th series, p. 48; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 285. iii. 57.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1812. iii. 58.—*Ibid.*, vol. x., No. 579; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 325. iv. 1.—G. W. Conder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 380. iv. 2.—A. C. Price, *Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 141. iv. 22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 480.

Chap. v., ver. 16.—"The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned!"

I. THE secret of man's perfection may be summed up in these short words: Love to God. The secret of man's sin may be stated as shortly: Defect of love to God. As the former implies truth and holiness, and purity of motive, and unity of will with His will; so this latter implies the departure of all these graces. But not only this: the heart allows no vacuum. Sin is not a negative only, but a positive condition. Where love has departed there the opposite of love enters, viz., selfishness, with all its baneful consequences. And the essence of selfishness is, that a man lives, not for and in another, be that other his neighbour or his God, but for and in himself.

II. This selfishness, arising out of defect of love to God, and, in God, to others, is not an *act*, or a series of acts in man, but a *state*, out of which spring, as the symptoms out of a disease, those sinful acts of selfishness which we call sins. Selfishness has turned love into lust, dignity into pride, humility into meanness, zeal into ambition, charity into ostentation; has turned family and friendly love into partizanship, patriotism into faction, religion itself into bigotry. It penetrates into and infiltrates every thought, every desire, every word, every act; so that whatsoever is of it, and not of faith, is sin.

III. Man placed under love, though in bond and covenant to God and his neighbour, was really and essentially free, a child of God's family; his will and God's will being one, law became to him liberty. But under selfishness, though he has broken loose from covenant with God and his neighbour, he is to all intents and purposes a slave; in bondage to his own desires and passions, which he ought to be, and wishes to be, ruling.

IV. Sin is no work, no creation, of God. It is essentially a departure from God—a departure in the root of our being; a departure begun in our parent stock, and thence propagated down through all us, the branches. And this departure can only have begun by an act of the will of man. God created us free, gave our first parents a command to keep, which very fact implied that they had power to break it. Sin had its practical beginning in the will of man. And this beginning we read of in Scripture in the history of the Fall.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 5.

EZEKIEL.

Chap. 1., ver. 24.—"When they stood, they let down their wings."

I. CONSIDER the subject of Christian experience. Can the soul when lifted stay above in that serene element into which it is ascended? Plainly enough, it is possible only as we keep good the faith, or when it ebbs, renew it. And precisely here is the difficulty: that the disciple has gravitations in him still, that pull him all the while downwards, and settle him on his feet before he knows it. And then, as soon as he begins to stand, his wings are folded, even as the flying creatures fold their wings instinctively when they settle on their feet, having for the time no use for them. The moment he begins to rest on mortal supports, and find his hope in mortal good, he ceases in the same degree to live by faith. All unsteadiness, wavering, collapse in Christian living, is caused somehow, in one way or another—for the ways are numberless—by dropping out of the simple first faith, and beginning to rest on supports from below.

II. A great many persons who mean to be, and think they really are, disciples, miss ever going above a service on foot, by not conceiving at all the more ethereal range of experience, into which true faith would lift them. (1) They undertake, for example, to become reformers and philanthropists, and really believe that they are more superlatively, genuinely Christian in it than others who have more to say of experiences. Their element is agitation, seldom any way of appeal that bears a look of Christian peace or repose. (2) Ritualism is another foot-passenger that, having no sufficient conception of faith, has, of course, no better conception of the higher ranges of life prospected by it. (3) There is a class of men outside of the Church, or sometimes in it, who undertake to be religious or Christian, and really suppose they are, because of a certain patronage they give to the Church and the Word.

II. True religion, according to the Christian idea, makes an immensely wide chasm by the faith at which it begins, or in which it is born. It is not any mere playing out of nature

on its own level, but it is the lifting up of the man above himself in a transformation that makes him new to himself.

H. BUSHNELL, *Sermons on Living Subjects*, p. 55.

REFERENCES: i. 4.—Bishop Lightfoot, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 250. i. 28.—W. M. Statham, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p 152; J. P. Gledstone, *Ibid.*, vol. xvii., p. 403.

Chap. ii., ver. 1.—"And He said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee."

I. IN the very Book in which humility and lowliness of mind are constantly inculcated; in which we are always meeting with injunctions to *bend and bow*, if we would be divinely visited; here are instances of men summoned to get up from the dust of conscious littleness and unworthiness, that they might be divinely spoken with; of men, prone upon their faces in the presence of God, who were requested to place themselves upon their feet before He could say anything to them, or make any use of them. Yet we may be quite sure that their prior prostration was equally indispensable. Once and again Ezekiel fell upon his face, and if he had not so fallen he would never have accomplished what he did. But it is quite true, on the other hand, that no one ever does any great thing in the service of truth and humanity, unless he has superb confidence in himself—unless he can feel that *he* is divinely called and qualified. If he be not self-satisfied and self-reliant, he will be no servant of the Lord—no polished shaft in His quiver. This is what we may find for ourselves in the angel's address to the prophet of Chebar—the importance of self-respect; an importance which is frequently implied, and much recognised in the Scriptures.

II. When are we not self-respecting? (1) He is not for one who craves and courts the approbation of others, and sets himself to gain it, who wants it, wants it to comfort and uphold him, who can be strong and happy enough while others are praising or smiling on him, but when they are not waxes feeble and melancholy. (2) Again, he is wanting in self-reverence, who gives himself at all to imitate another, who, in any work which may be laid upon him, tries to repeat the greatness of another, to copy his distinctions rather than to evoke and cultivate his own, to strain after his dimensions, rather than to be as perfect as he can within his own. (3) He is not self-respecting who hesitates at all to go with his

convictions, who fears to trust and follow the light within him, when the many are moving in the opposite direction. (4) Beware of losing self-respect through living dramatically —with a daily appearance put on which is not true to the reality—with the frequent assumption before spectators of that which does not belong to you. Beware of losing it, especially, through for ever failing to obey your higher promptings, and for ever regretting and bemoaning the future, while never seriously endeavouring to improve.

S. A. Tipple, *Sunday Mornings at Upper Norwood*, p. 178.

When God raised Ezekiel and set him on his feet before He spoke to him, was it not a declaration of the truth that man might lose the words of God because of a low and grovelling estimate of himself, as well as because of a conceited one? The best understanding of God could come to man only when man was upright and self-reverent in his privilege as the child of God.

I. There is much to-day of thoughtless and foolish depreciation of man and his conditions. I want to denounce this as the very spirit of ignorance, shutting men's ears hopelessly against the hearing of all the highest truths. In large circles of life, there is an habitual disparagement of human life, its joys and its prospects. Man is on his face. He must hear God's voice calling him to another attitude, or he is hopeless.

II. Many men own the possibility of good which is open to them, while still they are despairing or cynical about the world itself, about the cause of human life in general. This is not merely a speculative opinion. It is an influence which must reach a man's character. A man can have no high respect for himself unless he has a high respect for his human kind. He can have no strong hope for himself unless he has a strong hope for his human kind. And so, whatever be his pure tastes and lofty principles, one trembles for any man whom he hears hopelessly decrying human life in general, or the special condition of his own time.

III. If a man believes in the misery of human life and does not believe in God, he is dragged down among the brutes. If a man believes in the misery of human life and does believe in God, he is carried up to higher notions of God's government, which have loftier purposes than mere happiness or pain. The one great question about all the kind of temper of which I have spoken, is whether it still believes in God. For all

belief in God is, must be, belief in ultimate good. No view of the universe can be despairing which keeps Him still in sight.

This was the optimism of Jesus. He saw beyond the sin salvation. He never upbraided the sin except to save men from it. "Not to condemn the world, but to save the world," was His story of His mission. And at His cross the shame and hope of humankind joined hands.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *The Candle of the Lord*, p. 147.

REFERENCES: ii. 1.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 159; S. Macnaughton, *Real Religion and Real Life*, p. 195.

Chap. ii., ver. 6.—"And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house."

WHAT is here implied, as the trial of the prophet Ezekiel, was fulfilled more or less in the case of all the prophets. They were not teachers merely, but confessors. They came not merely to unfold the law, or to foretell the Gospel, but to warn and rebuke; not to rebuke only, but to suffer. This world is a scene of conflict between good and evil. The evil not only avoids, but persecutes, the good; the good cannot conquer, except by suffering.

I. The case seems to be this:—Those who do not serve God with a single heart know they ought to do so, and they do not like to be reminded that they ought. And when they fall in with any one who does live to God, he serves to remind them of it, and that is unpleasant to them, and that is the first reason why they are angry with a religious man; the sight of him disturbs them, and makes them uneasy. Accordingly, as far as they have power to do it, they persecute him, either, as the text implies, with cruel untrue words, or with cold, or fierce, or jealous looks, or in some worse ways. A good man is an offence to a bad man. The sight of him is a sort of insult, and he is irritated at him, and does him what harm he can.

II. Religious persons are protected in this day from all great persecutions, and they cannot sufficiently be thankful for it. And yet, nevertheless, most true is it, that even now, no one can give his mind to God, and show by his actions that he fears God, but he will incur the dislike and opposition of the world, and it is important that he should be aware of this

and be prepared for it. (1) Do not be too eager to suppose you are ill-treated for your religion's sake. Make as light of matters as you can. This is the true Christian spirit, to be meek and gentle under ill-usage, cheerful under slander, forgiving towards enemies, and silent in the midst of angry tongues. (2) Recollect you cannot do any one thing of these duties without God's help. Therefore you must pray to Him for the power. (3) None of us, even the best, have resisted the world as we ought to have done. Let us search our consciences; let us look back on our past lives. Let us try to live more like Christians, more like children of God. Let us beg Him to teach us how to confess Him before men, lest if we deny Him now, He may deny us before the angels of God hereafter.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. v., p. 259; see also J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. viii., p. 141.

REFERENCES: ii. 6.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 225. ii. 7.—D. Moore, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3432. ii. 23.—G. W. McCree, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 140. iii. 5, 7.—E. Mason, *A Pastor's Legacy*, p. 451; H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1812. iii. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1431; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 119.

Chap. iii., vers. 17-19.—"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at My mouth, and give them warning from Me," etc.

I. THE ministry of divine truths is a special ordinance of God. The watchman is not (1) self-constituted; (2) self-instructed; (3) self-sent.

II. The ministry of divine truths is entrusted with the duty of warning men. Three mistakes about warning may be pointed out: (1) That warning is independent of knowledge; (2) that warning betokens hardness of nature; (3) that warning is the lowest and easiest duty of the ministry.

III. The duty of warning men is connected with a just distribution of responsibility.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 92.

REFERENCE: iii. 18.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, 3rd series, p. 16.

Chap. iii., ver. 22.—"Go forth into the plain, and I will there talk with thee."

IN the text there are three points of deep interest.

I. The speciality of God's appointments.

II. The personality of God's communications.

III. The familiarity of God's condescension. Application. (1) God has ever something to say to man. (2) In seeking solitude, man should seek God. (3) Man himself should often propose to commune with God.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 363; see also *Pulpit Notes*, p. 197.

REFERENCES: iii. 22.—W. M. Arthur, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 324. iv. 1.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii., p. 236. vii. 2, 3.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 79. vii. 5, 6.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 155.

Chap. viii., ver. 12.—**"Then said He unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery?"**

I. THINK of the dark and painted chamber which we all of us carry in our hearts.

Every man is a mystery to himself as to his fellows. For every man is no fixed somewhat, but a growing personality, with dormant possibilities of good and evil lying in him, which up to the very last moment of his life may flame up altogether unexpected and astonishing developments. The walls of the chamber of the text were all painted with animal forms, to which the ancients were bowing down. By our memory, and by that marvellous faculty that people call the imagination, and by our desires, we are for ever painting the walls of the inmost chambers of our hearts with such pictures. That is an awful power which we possess, and alas! too often used for foul idolatries.

II. Look at the idolatries of the dark chamber. All these seventy grey-bearded elders that were bowing down before the bestial gods which they had portrayed, had, no doubt, often stood in the courts of the Temple, and there made prayers to the God of Israel, with broad phylacteries, to be seen of men. Their true worship was the worship in the dark. The other was conscious or unconscious hypocrisy. And the very chamber in which they were gathered, according to the ideal representation of our text, was a chamber in, and therefore partaking of the consecration of, the Temple. So their worship was doubly criminal, in that it was sacrilege as well as idolatry. Both things are true about us.

III. Look at the sudden crashing in upon the cowering worshippers of the revealing light. One day a light will flash in upon all the dark cells. We must all be manifested before the

judgment seat of Christ. Let Christ come into your hearts by your lowly penitence, by your humble faith, and all these vile shapes that you have painted on its walls will, like phosphorescent pictures in the daytime, pale and disappear when the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His beams, floods your soul, leaving no part dark, and turning all into a temple of the living God.

A. MACLAREN, *Christ in the Heart*, p. 217.

REFERENCES: viii. 12.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 455. ix. 4.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 60. ix. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 223.

Chap. x., ver. 8.—"And there appeared in the cherubims the form of a man's hand under their wings."

I. SEE what a Divine work creation is. Here, in this human hand beneath the angel's wing, do we see the procedure of the Divine work. All God's most beautiful things are related to use. Beauty and use are God's two anointed ministers to the world. In the gospel of utilitarianism, there is the hand without the wing; in the gospel of mysticism there is no man's hand under the wings.

II. See what Divine providence is. Man is the one manifold. (1) In the multiplicity of Divine operations we see the human hand beneath the angel's wing. From His exalted concealment God is constantly energizing by the human hand. This in all ages has been. (2) And is not our redemption a hand, the human hand beneath the Divine wing—a hand stretched out, the "likeness of a man's hand beneath the cherubim"? What is the humanity of Jesus, but the human hand beneath the Divine wing? (3) This thought rebukes the many false modern notions of God. See in this God's own picture of His providence, and never be it ours to divorce that human from the Divine in God's being.

III. See in the human hand beneath the wing of the angel, the relation of a life of action to a life of contemplation. In our most exalted flights we need the human hand. And by the hand understand deeds,—they administer even by bodily administration; but the hands under the wings show how they surpass the deeds of their action by the excellence of their contemplation.

IV. In a word, see what religion is. It is the human hand beneath the angel's wing. Has your religion a hand in it? It

is practical, human, sympathetic. Has it a wing? It is lofty, unselfish, inclusive, Divine. Has it a hand? How does it prove itself? By embracing this hand, laying hold upon, by works. Has it a wing? How does it prove itself? By prayer, by faith, by heaven.

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. i., p. 321.

REFERENCE: x. 8.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 203

Chap. x., ver. 13 (with Ezek. xxxvii., ver. 9).—"As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel . . . . Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

IF the wheel be taken as representing the whole scheme and fabric of nature, geological, astronomical, and elemental; and the breath, as the secret of life and motion, you have a philosophical conception of the universe. But if you contemplate the mechanism of nature, apart from the intelligence and vitality of the breath, your unphilosophical method of thought will confound your reason, and make the rational apprehension of anything an impossibility.

I. Consider the mystery of evil as included in the great whole and circuit of universal existence. Let us learn to contemplate the fall and the death of man, together with his new birth and resurrection, his ascension and glorification, as comprehended in the wheel of God. "O wheel!" Oh, endless round, from God, into the limitations and weaknesses of self-hood, into the mistakes and wilfulnesses of self-hood, and thence into exhausted powers, into weariness and suffering, and through weariness and suffering into reconciliation to the redeeming mercies of eternal love, and then onward and onward through successive purgations and renewals, towards rest and home in the fixed righteousness and blessedness of the Divine-human, the eternal-human, life.

II. What the human soul, all the world over, needs is not to be harangued, however eloquently, about the old accepted religion; but to be permeated, charmed, and taken captive, by a warmer and more potent breath of God than they ever felt before. The Divine breath is as exquisitely adapted to the requirements of the soul's nature as a June morning to the planet. Nor does the morning breath leave the trees freer to delight themselves and develop themselves under its influence, than the breath of God allows each human mind to unfold according to its genius. Nothing stirs the central wheel of the soul like the breath of God. The whole man is quickened, his

senses are new senses, his emotions new emotions, his reason, his affections, his imagination, are all newborn; the change is greater than he knows, he marvels at the powers in himself which the breath is opening and calling forth.

J. PULSFORD, *Our Deathless Hope*, p. 278.

REFERENCE: xi. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 591.

Chap. xi., ver. 16.—"Yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary."

IN trying to understand the great promise of the text, note—

I. The idea of asylum and protection. "I will be as a little sanctuary." "I will be the shield and protector and sure refuge of trusting souls." Is not this what every awakened soul needs and seeks? Some safe, sure refuge from all that threatens, afflicts, alarms; from the thunders, loud or deep, of broken law; from the accusations of conscience, from the troubles of life, from the terrors of death—asylum from them all? A true and real relief in all soul-trouble—in anything that agitates a man's deepest consciousness; in anything that touches the health, and so the safety of the soul, can be found only in one way—by moving *Godwards*, and entering, although it may be at first with fear and trembling, into the built and open sanctuary of His presence.

II. A sanctuary means, also, at least in the nomenclature of the Scriptures, a place of purification, where we may wash and be clean; and may so avail ourselves of the helps to goodness which are provided, that the rest of our time may be pure and holy. Our very words tell us this. "Sanctity;" "sanctification"—a sanctuary is not equal to its name if it does not promote these. Safety is a poor, even a mean, thing, if it be indeed conceivable, without purity.

III. A further idea in the word sanctuary is the idea of nourishment. A hospice for the entertainment of strangers, or any hospitable house, is never without bread. And will not God feed His refugees? Will He be a little sanctuary in which they may die? On His table there is bread enough and to spare.

IV. This is a text (1) for all our changes of place, for our journeys, for our absences. It is a text to take round the world with us if we are going. "I will be to them as a little sanctuary—" where?—"in the countries where they shall come." (2) In all states. For all times and for all troubles and for all

needs, there is a present, gracious God, with all His grace also present, to heal, to help, to love unto the end.

A. RALEIGH, *The Little Sanctuary*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: xi. 19, 20.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 156. xi. 21.—G. Gilfillan, *The Dundee Pulpit*, p. 161. xii. 6.—J. M. Whiton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 166. xii. 27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1164. xiii. 7.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 143. xiii. 10.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 158. xiii. 10, 11.—C. J. Thompson, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 675; J. Baines, *Sermons*, p. 201. xiii. 10-12.—Spurgeon, *Ibid.*, vol. xiv., No. 816.

Chap. xiii., vers. 17-23.—"Likewise, thou son of man, set thy face against the daughters of thy people, which prophesy out of their own heart,' etc.

I. THE sewing of the pillows under the arms or elbows of those who came to consult the prophetesses was a symbolical act, intended to convey an answer by way of parable. The prophetesses wished to assure the people who came to them, of peace and ease and emancipation from slavery; what more likely than that they should not only give promises of these good things to come by word of mouth, but cause the people, who applied to them, to sit at ease, to be propped up with pillows as a sign and token of the condition of peace and rest and ease, which they promised in their prophecies. In like manner I think it probable that the handkerchiefs which the prophetesses put on the heads of their votaries, "on the heads of persons of all ages," were probably an emblem of liberty. And when the prophetesses placed these handkerchiefs on the heads of those who came to them, it was probably intended to declare by a parable, that the people would soon be free, and not subject to the king of Babylon any more.

II. The dealing of the prophetesses is particularly blamed because it was the same to all; there was only one message, and that one of peace for Jerusalem, one of joy in the future. There was no examination of the spiritual condition of those who came, and adapting of the message accordingly. The penitent and the impenitent had the same pillow to rest upon, and the same cap of liberty put upon the head. When we consider the utter confusion that would be produced, and the fearful manner in which the lessons of Ezekiel and his messages of lamentation and mourning and woe would be neutralised and made of none effect, we shall not be surprised that God pronounced a very grievous woe against these prophetesses, and promised as a special boon to His people that they should be delivered out of their hands.

III. We all have our Ezekiels to tell us the truth, and we all have our false prophets and prophetesses ready to contradict the truth, and to substitute lies in place of it. Ezekiel tells us that we must repent; he assures us that God does not wish the death of a sinner, that God has, in fact, sent His Son into the world that we might live and not die. But still he tells us that we must repent; that we must correct what is amiss; that we must examine what our sins are, and forsake them. The ministers of Christ's Gospel make a fearful and dangerous mistake, if they ever cry, "Peace, peace," and nothing else.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 5th series, p. 154.

Chap. xiii., ver. 22.—"With lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life."

I. WHERE the way of life was broad the false prophets strove to make it narrow, and where it was narrow they strove to make it broad; by their solemn and superstitious lies they frightened and perplexed the good, while by their lives of ungodliness they emboldened and encouraged the wicked. The tendency of either evil to produce the other is sure and universal. We cannot exist without some influences of fear and restraint on the one hand, and without some indulgence of freedom on the other. God has provided for both these wants, so to speak, of our nature; He has told us whom we should fear, and where we should be restrained, and where, also, we may safely be in freedom; there is the fruit forbidden, and the fruit which we may eat freely. But if the restraint and the liberty be either of them put in the wrong place the double evil is sure to follow. Superstition is the rest of wickedness, and wickedness is the breaking loose of superstition.

II. Nothing is more common than to see great narrowness of mind, great prejudices, and great disorderliness of conduct, united in the same person. Nothing is more common than to see the same mind utterly prostrated before some idol of its own, and supporting that idol with the most furious zeal, and at the same time utterly rebellious to Christ, and rejecting with scorn the enlightening, the purifying, the loving influences of Christ's spirit. Every one of us has a tendency to some idol or other, if not to many; and our business is especially each to watch ourselves, lest we be ensnared to our particular idol.

III. Things good, things noble, things sacred, may all become

idols. To some minds truth is an idol, to others justice, to others charity or benevolence; and others are beguiled by objects of a different sort of sacredness; some have made Christ's mother their idol; some Christ's servants; some, again, Christ's sacraments, and Christ's own body, the Church. If these may all be idols, where can we find a name so holy as that we may surrender up our whole souls to it; before which obedience, reverence without measure, intense humility, most unreserved adoration, may be duly tendered? One name there is, and one only; one alone in heaven and in earth; not truth, not justice, not benevolence, not Christ's mother, not His holiest servants, not His blessed sacraments, not His very mystical body, but Himself only, who died for us, and rose again, Jesus Christ, both God and man. As no idol can stand in Christ's place, or in any way save us, so whoever worships Christ truly is preserved from all idols and has life eternal.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. iv.

REFERENCE: xiv. 1-3.—Bishop How, *Plain Words*, 2nd series, p. 252.

Chap. xiv., ver. 3.—"Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them?"

I. WHAT is the sin and the voice of which the prophet speaks, and how may we ourselves be guilty of it? The father of modern philosophy and science has shown us that there are in the mind of man, as man, natural idols, which act as impediments to his acquisition of knowledge, and his search after truth. Till these idols are overthrown and broken in pieces and taken away, it is simply useless for man to pursue knowledge. His efforts will be neutralised, and their results vitiated. He will not arrive at truth. Now if this be true in the matter of human science it is not less worthy of our regard in the matter of Divine truth, and of the knowledge of God. We cannot know God, whom to know is eternal life, as long as these natural obstacles are not taken out of the way. What, then, is the practical bearing of this truth? (1) First there must be a single eye to the knowledge of God. If we have not made up our minds that the one only object worth living for is God, and the knowledge of God, we have set up idols in our hearts no less than the men in Ezekiel's time, who came and sat before him. (2) Not only must there be a clear perception of God as the one sole

object of our services, but there must also be a readiness to sacrifice anything in order to know and to serve Him. The man who is not prepared at any cost to himself to know and to serve God, is not prepared to serve Him at all.

II. There are certain general principles to which it behoves us to give heed when we come to the worship of God. (1) First of all we must empty ourselves of ourselves. We must come as though our present knowledge of God were as nothing, and as if God were still to be known and learnt. (2) There is nothing which so infallibly prevents us from seeing the truth of God as secret sin. As long as sin, in one of its innumerable forms, lurks in the heart or on the conscience, the service of God will be a vain thing, because the pursuit of truth is a lie. It is that practised dishonesty, it is that cherished lust, it is that pampered self-love, it is that incurable indolence, which vitiates all your worship and renders your religion a lie.

S. LEATHES, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 209.

Chap. xiv., vers. 4, 5.—"I the Lord will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols; that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from Me through their idols."

I. THE word estranged implies a former condition of close relationship and affection, from which they have since fallen. You would not say of a mere acquaintance, if you ceased to see him, that he was estranged from you; but if the love of an old friend grow cold, if a child become indifferent to his home, or a husband fail in his devotion to his wife, you describe such a falling off as estrangement. In this temper certain elders of Israel presented themselves before the prophet of God. God's eye marked them as they came, and He warned His prophet instantly. God will not hear their prayer, nor answer them. Why? "Because they are all estranged from Me through their idols."

II. The question which God puts "Should I be enquired of at all by them?" expects the answer "No," and yet it is not the answer which He gives it. His answer admits us to a nearer view of His mysterious dealings with men. When men thus estranged and alienated from Him in heart present themselves in person before Him, He does not refuse them an audience. They pray, He hears—their prayer is answered; but how fatal is the gift which He grants! "I the Lord will

answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols.'

III. "That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart." This is God's purpose in answering the evil desires of hearts alienated from His love. Their heart is to become the snare, the net in which they shall be caught, the pitfall in which they shall be entrapped. Could we look back on our years past we should see how many wishes, cherished while we professed to give them up for God, how many talents used in vanity, how many selfish prayers persisted in and gratified, had become like the meshes of a net to take our souls withal. Look back in time, turn your face towards God in real prayer, pray that He may not fulfil His threats, nor answer any other of your prayers, except you say, "Not my will, but Thine, be done."

C. W. FURSE, *Sermons preached at Richmond*, p. 12.

Chap. xiv., ver. 8; xx., ver. 38.—"Ye shall know that I am the Lord."

SUCH is the solemn burden with which the prophet Ezekiel closes almost every paragraph of his prophecy: the proposed result of all the judgments denounced and all the mercies promised by God through his ministration. A result so announced, so repeated, cannot be unimportant.

I. When we come seriously to consider the matter, shall we not find that it is a lesson worth knowing at any price—at the price of home and comfort, of wealth and vigour, yea, of life itself, if need be? For let us think on the importance of this knowledge—to know that God is the Lord. On this, in a rational and responsible being, all real and enduring happiness depends. God is the Author of his life, the only satisfying object of his soul's desire. On communion with Him, on grace derived from Him, on growing in likeness to Him, depend both his present and his advancing power for good. To know Him, not only leads on to eternal life, but it is eternal life itself.

II. Let us endeavour to sketch the boundaries of this knowledge, and give some idea of its nature, and how it is brought about. Man of himself has it not, he requires teaching it. Moreover, it is not a knowledge which any education, however complete, could confer upon us. Education may teach the knowledge of God's works, may make a man conversant with the interesting and glorious details of creation, but it cannot teach the knowledge of God Himself. You

may, and often do, find the accomplished natural philosopher the accurate and experienced historian, the minute Biblical scholar, yet in total ignorance of the knowledge implied in those words, "Ye shall know that I am the Lord."

III. "Ye shall know that I am Jehovah." It is God's promise to His people. And it is a crowning promise—one that includes all others in itself. For the more knowledge there is of God, the more love will there be towards Him; and the more love there is towards Him the more enjoyment there will be of Him; so that they who know Him best shall stand highest in the ranks of the blessed.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 120.

REFERENCE: xiv. 11.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xv., p. 146.

Chap. xiv., vers. 12-14.—"The word of the Lord came again to me, saying, Son of man, when the land sinneth against Me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out Mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it," etc.

THE language of the text is worthy of remark, because it speaks of Noah, Daniel, and Job saving their own souls by their righteousness; a form of expression to which undoubtedly many persons would object if it were used at the present day; it would be said to savour of the notion of salvation by works, and to be opposed to the doctrine of justification by faith.

I. In order to illustrate the subject, let us notice first that if we look at the history of the three holy men mentioned in the text, we shall find that they did save their souls or their lives by their righteousness. It is impossible to deny that certain great blessings *did* come to them because they were righteous, and if we had no religious theory at stake which we were afraid of injuring, we could not fear to say that their righteousness saved them. And it is manifestly in accordance with our own deepest sense of right and justice that this should be so; the notion that good deeds will bring a reward, and that evil deeds will bring punishment, is too deep to be rooted out.

II. Who shall say with our Lord's description of the judgment before him, that the last judgment will not be a judgment according to works, that righteousness will not save souls alive? If we have a real deep view of our redemption through the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall not be afraid to speak freely as the Scriptures speak concerning the

mode of our salvation. On the one hand the Scriptures say the Lord Jesus Christ has said, our own consciences say, that the man who turns away from his wickedness and does that which is lawful and right shall save his soul alive; nothing can interfere with this great principle. At the same time, when a human being conscious of sin presents himself before God, he will feel in his inmost heart that his righteousness is as filthy rags; he will feel that he can by no manner of means save himself, but he knows that he does not depend upon himself, he comes before God as one redeemed by Christ, he claims God's mercy—not because he has done his duty, but because Christ has died.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 33.

REFERENCES: xiv. 13.—W. McAll, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 104. xiv. 14.—H. Griffith, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 401; Parker, *Christian Commonwealth*, Sept. 2nd, 1886. xiv. 19, 20.—J. W. Burgon, *Ninety-one Short Sermons*, No. 81. xiv. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1651; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvii., p. 151. xv. 1, 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 125. xv. 2.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 22. xvi. 1, 2.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 323. xvi. 5, 6.—*Ibid.*, vol. viii., No. 468.

Chap. xvi., ver. 6.—"Live; yea, I said unto thee . . . Live."

I. PREACHERS are servants of God. We are God's servants on behalf of souls. The souls of our world are desolate and dead as winter; it is the will of God that a spring-time should be brought out in their history, that they should become verdant and flourishing as the garden of the Lord. We are commissioned to traverse the whole world with a life-giving ministry, and to exercise it on behalf of every soul.

II. There are souls dead. (1) Men are ignorant of the nature of their souls. Men suppose that there is a congruity between their souls and the pleasures and gains of the present world, whereas there is an utter incongruity. If souls know not their own nature, it is not too strong a figure to speak of them as dead. (2) The souls of men are not fulfilling the end of their being. (3) The souls of men are strangers to the peculiar joys of their being. The love of God is the highest of all possible pleasures. The love of God, tasted and enjoyed in everything, is that fine pleasure concealed in everything, concealed expressly for souls, and which only souls can extract. Human souls are dead to this bliss.

III. Therefore, as the servants of the Gospel, the cry of our

ministry is, Live. We are charged by God to call upon you to repent, to sue for mercy, and solemnly declare to you that not to repent is to perish. We are to tell you that He who knew no sin died for your sins, and that, therefore, life, eternal life, is offered to you through His death.

J. PULSFORD, *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. ii., p. 567.

REFERENCES: xvi. 6.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 190; J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 253. xvi. 9-14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 813. xvi. 10.—*Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p 358.

Chap. xvi., ver. 27.—"**Behold, therefore I have stretched out My hand over thee, and have diminished thine ordinary food, and delivered thee unto the will of them that hate thee.**"

I. THE last clause of the text may be considered as supposing that a man becomes the slave of another, and that this other is one who entertains towards him a feeling of hatred. Through the apostasy of Adam, Satan obtained a dominion over the globe which he never could have held had our first parents remained firm in their allegiance. It may have been that it was hatred to man which first moved Satan to attempt his destruction. That haughty spirit, chafed by his defeat, and furious at his own exile from happiness, could not endure to look on the purities and felicities of Paradise. Man was innocent, and that made him hateful; man was happy, and he was, therefore, instinctively detested. And if we may speak of man as an object of hatred to Satan when he held fast his allegiance, what may we suppose him now—now that, seduced into apostasy, he has been secured by the interference of God manifest in the flesh? Who will attempt to tell what must have been the rage and disappointment of the devil when he found that the creature whose overthrow he had compassed, and whom he therefore regarded as his undisputed prey, was the object of a most wondrous arrangement—an arrangement which in the largest measure was to bring good out of evil, and cause that the very fall of our race should issue in man's exaltation to a far higher than his original glory?

II. Satan must hate man, so that whosoever is the servant of this chief of fallen angels, is accurately in the condition described by our text. There are but two moral states. Mankind admit morally of only one division—the servants of Satan or the disciples of Christ. Therefore is no alternative but this; for the whole world would have been Satan's empire had not Christ

interposed. And whilst the effect of that interposition has been to diminish that empire already, and to secure its final demolition, it is only those who acquire "repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," who are translated into the new kingdom before which every other shall ultimately give way Every unconverted man is virtually in such a state that he may be described as "delivered unto the will of him that hateth him."

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1654.

REFERENCES: xvi. 54.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 264; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 354. xvi. 62, 63.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1289. xvii. 4.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvii., p. 95.

Chap. xviii., vers. 1-4.

THIS chapter helps us to clear up a puzzle which has tormented the minds of men in all ages whenever they have thought of God, and of whether God meant them well or meant them ill. For all men have been tempted. We are tempted at times to say: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." That is, we are punished not for what we have done wrong, but for what our fathers did wrong. Men complain of their ill luck and bad chance, as they call it, till they complain of God, and say, as the Jews said in Ezekiel's time: God's ways are unequal, partial, unfair.

I. God does visit the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation—but of whom? Of them that hate Him. If a family, or a class, or a whole nation become incorrigibly profligate, foolish, base—in three or four generations they will either die out or vanish. Whole nations will sink thus; as the Jews sank in Ezekiel's time, and again in our Lord's time; and be conquered, trampled on, counted for nothing, because they were worth nothing.

II. But suppose that the children, when their fathers' sins are visited on them, are not incorrigible. Suppose they are like the wise son of whom Ezekiel speaks (ver. 14), who seeth all his father's sins, and doeth not such like—then has not God been merciful and kind to him in visiting his father's sins on him? He has. God is justified therein. His eternal laws of natural retribution, severe as they are, have worked in love and in mercy, if they have taught the young man the ruinousness, the deadliness of sin. Men fall by sin; they rise again by repentance and amendment. They rise—they enter into their

new life weak and wounded, from their own fault. But they enter in, and from that day things begin to mend—the weather begins to clear—the soil begins to yield again; punishment gradually ceases when it has done its work, the weight lightens, the wounds heal, the weakness strengthens, and by God's grace they are made men of again and saved.

C. KINGSLEY, *All Saints' Day and Other Sermons*, p. 238.

Chap. xviii., ver. 2.—"The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

IT is not strange that so well known a law as the fatal persistency with which evil follows on from generation to generation, should find its expression in the Proverbs of Israel, but it is strange that you should find the prophet quoting it only to denounce it. He rises up, having quoted the proverb, and he declares that it is unworthy of those who bear the name of Israel. "It is a heathenish proverb. What mean ye to use it concerning Israel? It is not only heathenish, it does wrong to God; it violates the rights of the Almighty over His creatures. Behold, all souls are Mine."

I. The proverb is unquestionably true. Every land, every race, every age, has seen its truth. We often look round and see how true it is that a man is weighted in the race of life by the folly, by the extravagance, of his father. A man, on the other hand, toils on industriously, accumulates possessions for his children, and in doing so gives them the advantage of the position which he has established. That which is true with regard to personal history is true also with regard to national history. Are we not bearing the weight of our fathers' sins? We are enduring the pain of our teeth being set on edge because of the follies and the sins of past generations.

II. What is the reason, then, that the prophet should take upon himself to denounce what is so obviously true? He denounces its use because it is used in an untrue sense, and for an untrue purpose. It is quoted in the sense of trying to make people cast a shadow upon the loving-kindness of God; therefore, the prophet takes up his parable against them. For every soul, for every nation, there is a glorious destiny; and for men to shelter themselves from their duty by declaring that a hard fate has bound them about with its fetters of iron, and that there is no escape for them; that their whole life is shipwrecked and ruined; that they are the last miserable inheritors of the fatality of their own organisation, of the

tyranny of their national position, is to declare that they have lost faith in the power of God; it is to take a solemn truth and wrest it to their own destruction. Life is the prerogative of man, and the power of taking upon them a new life is never denied to those who look God in the face, to those who grasp firmly the weapons of life, and turn to their duty as men. It is not our part to live for ever in the north pole of life, and declare that it is all bitterness, and a blasted fate; it is not our duty to live in the sunny south, and to declare that our life is all sweetness and sunshine; your lot and mine is cast in these moderate poles, where we know that law rules, and love rules above our heads, sweet love beneath our feet, sweet law, both strong, both sweet, both the offspring of God, both heralds of encouragement, to lift up our energies, to exert ourselves in the toil of life, and to be men. It is in the counterpoising truths of law which is inexorable, and love which is never inexorable, that the power of life and heroism of life is found.

BISHOP BOYD CARPENTER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 353.

REFERENCE: xviii. 2.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 107.

Chap. xviii., ver. 4.—"Behold, all souls are Mine."

I. EVERY living soul is, in a sense, the subject, the sharer, of the privileges, the attributes of God. (1) There is, without contradiction, the privilege of life. Better than silent stone, or sounding waves, or moving worlds, is one who holds the eternal spark of life. Whatever comes we feel we know it; it is something to have lived. This is what it means. It is to have been single, separate, self-determining. Man is conscious that he is himself a *cause*, a self-determining power, that he can will, and freely choose between alternative courses. Free, personal, individual, he has indeed a splendid, if an awful, heritage—*life* and like God's life: "All souls are Mine." (2) Another privilege of this lofty place in the scale of being is immortality. (3) A third privilege is the intuition of moral truth, and with this the sense of moral obligation.

II. If the soul is so endowed by God, it follows necessarily that God has a claim upon the soul. It is on success in realising, remembering, acting upon this truth of our relationship to God, that so much of our true happiness and our true dignity depends. Of what character is this claim? (1) God has a rightful claim upon our conscious dependence. We must

render Him this service for many reasons. (*a*) Clearly because to do so is to recognise and reverence facts. We *do* depend on God. He holds thee and me in the hollow of His hand. All things bright and dark, and glad and sorrowful, are full of the purposes of His unutterable compassion. (*b*) Such recognition is only a just outcome of gratitude. To be ungrateful is to be at once thoughtless and selfish and dishonourable. Gratitude is the loving recollection of those who, in some sense, first loved us. (*c*) The keeping alive the sense of conscious dependence upon God exercises upon our character a great moral influence. We never rise to the dignity of nature but by being natural. This dependence is one of those pure facts of nature which has imbibed none of the poison of the fall. Two powers accrue to the soul from cultivating the sense of it—resignation and strength. (2) God's preserving and so richly endowing the soul gives Him a claim that in its plan and activities He should have the first place. (3) And lastly, God makes this claim upon you that you despise no soul.

III. We learn from this subject two serious lessons: (1) The first is individual responsibility. (2) The second that the soul's true beatitude is to know God.

W. J. KNOX-LITTLE, *Manchester Sermons*, p. 22.

NOTE some of the elements which constitute the soul's priceless worth.

I. When God says, "All souls are Mine," there is in the term "Mine" a peculiar force, inapplicable in a similar degree to any other created existence on earth. God places Himself by His indwelling in such a relation to the souls of His elect, that the parting with a lost soul becomes the occasion of profound, mysterious sadness to God Himself. He has lived in it. He had purposed to live in it for ever. He made it for this end.

II. The soul possesses the awful attribute of immortality; it is infinite in its duration. The sense of infiniteness is in itself overwhelming. The mind is incapable of conceiving infinite time or space, and is burdened even by the vague shadowy idea that imagination attempts to picture. When it is not in reference to time or space, but to the breathing, thinking soul, we may well shrink back with amazement and fear from the contemplation.

III. There are in the soul capacities which seem as inexhaustible as its duration of existence. The early dreams of youth often embody themselves in after life in actual realities;

and in like manner the spiritual imaginations of the soul may be ideal pictures of what will hereafter be realised, of love, or beatitude, or power, or beauty, in worlds where all energies of the life attain their perfect fulness in God.

IV. Again, to enter into the mystery of a soul, it is necessary to consider its special vocation. Each separate soul is the embodying of a distinct idea of the mind of God. Each one is ordained to accomplish some one distinct purpose of God. This is the soul's vocation. It is this distinct personality which gives their dignity to individual men.

V. It is the property of every individual soul to comprehend more or less clearly the fact of its own responsibility, and to contemplate the end of its existence. Each dwells in a sphere of his own, revolving in his own orbit, which is beyond our earthly vision, as the real heavens are within the blue air which is the limit of our eyesight. All these elements of the inner world of life will in great measure depend, as to their character and intensity, on the apprehension which the soul has attained, through grace, of its own true dignity, its origin and purpose, its calling and its end.

T. T. CARTER, *Sermons*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: xviii. 4.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. vii., p. 153; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 232; vol. viii., p. 288; vol. x., p. 308. xviii. 5-9.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, 3rd series, p. 30. xviii. 13.—*Ibid.*, p. 16; E. V. Hall, *Sermons in Worcester Cathedral*, p. 58. xviii. 16, 17.—H. S. Fagan, *Good Words*, 1874, p. 842.

Chap. xviii., ver. 20 (with Exod. xx., ver. 5).—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son."

THESE passages severally profess to give a rule of Divine dealing, if not with the world generally at least with the people of Israel. And at first sight certainly they seem to enunciate principles which are diametrically opposed. To use the language of modern controversy, the one seems to adopt and the other to repudiate, the doctrine of imputed sin.

I. Quite independently of other difficulties, the picture of the Divine government drawn by Ezekiel at once suggests these questions—Is it true? Is it true that the son does not bear the iniquity of the father, nor the father the iniquity of the son? Ask the history of the world. What answer does it give? Blighted fortune, blighted name, blighted health, descending even to the third and fourth generation—do they

not tell you that the son *does* bear the iniquity of his father? Father of a bad son, sinking broken-hearted into his grave,—can you not read in his withered life that the father *does* bear the iniquity of the son? It needs but small acquaintance with the world's history to know that in this life vicarious suffering is no mere theological fiction, but a terrible reality.

II. We have but to admit that the lawgiver and the prophet are speaking of different things, and the difficulty of these two passages will almost disappear. (1) The whole scope of the Mosaic law, so far at least as its sanctions are concerned, is in the present life. Gratitude for earthly blessings, hope of earthly prosperity—the law strikes no higher note than these, and therefore we may fairly interpret Exodus xx. 5 as referring to this life only, and as containing a statement which, even without Scriptural authority, we should know to be true. (2) The Divine message delivered by Ezekiel tells us, in fact, that the rules by which the world of eternity is governed are not identical with those which rule the world of time. It tells us that things are permitted, done, nay, ordained *here*, which find no place *there*. And one of these essentially temporary ordinances is vicarious suffering. The suffering of the innocent does play a large and important part in the history of this world. And if there were no other world than this, it would be hard to reconcile such an ordinance with the existence of a perfectly moral governor. But look to that wondrous existence, some glimpses of which Christianity opens to our view. Think of all the powers of compensation for earthly suffering which may be found there; and then say whether, as a matter of pure selfishness, it may not be well for the innocent sufferer himself that he has suffered. Certainly St. Paul thought so when he declared, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

J. H. Jellett, *The Elder Son and Other Sermons*, p. 103.

References: xviii. 20, 21.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, 3rd series, p. 1. xviii. 23, 32.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1795.

Chap. xviii., ver. 25.—"Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not My way equal? are not your ways unequal?"

It seems that the Jews complained of the law under which they lived as unjust, because it spoke of the sins of fathers being visited upon their children. The proverb of the sour

grapes was one which had a very direct bearing upon the conduct of the people; if the proverb generally found favour in their eyes, and spoke the thoughts of their hearts, then it was of no use that Ezekiel should talk of sin and its punishment, and the need of repentance and amendment. Therefore, Ezekiel protested against the proverb as wicked and profane, and he lays down as the great truth which should destroy the effect of the lying proverb, that of the necessary punishment of sin; "the soul that sinneth, it shall die."

I. Ezekiel was not bringing in any new principle of government, but was only asserting a principle as old as the creation; and what he wished the people to believe was this, that although it had been held out as a warning against disobedience and an encouragement to obedience, that those who sinned were bringing in a curse which would affect others besides themselves, and that contrariwise, those who were holy and good were bringing a blessing down upon their children; still this was not to be supposed to be in opposition to the great law of every man standing or falling by his own deeds, being "judged by the things done in the body, whether good or bad." And so he would urge them to repentance; he would urge them not to speculate about their fathers' sins, but to leave their own.

II. There is still something repugnant to our idea of justice in the law, that the sins of the fathers should be visited upon the children, as the second commandment states that in some cases they are. But the principle of the children suffering for the fathers' sin was not at all peculiar to the Jewish law; it is a principle which, whether just or no, is manifestly the principle upon which the world is governed. It is the Lord's doing, however wonderful it may be in our eyes. God did not put us here to explain difficulties, but to work out our salvation; God does not require us to show how all His doings are the best and wisest that could be; but He requires of us to do His will. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth." Here is argument enough for a holy life; argument enough for all works of mercy, of patience, of faith, and love.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 1.

REFERENCES: xviii. 27.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 1st series, p. 91. xviii. 29.—F. Wagstaff, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 136. xviii. 30-32.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, 3rd series, p. 43.

Chap. xviii., ver. 31.—"Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

I. WHOEVER would teach as the Scriptures do, and especially whoever would teach as Christ does, must be careful to show men both sides of the awful picture beyond the grave: he must tell of judgment, as well as mercy; he must try always to temper fear with love. Observe the tone even of such a consoling passage as the text. Do not the words plainly teach that if sinners will not take our Saviour's most gracious offer—if they will not cast away all their transgressions and make them a new heart and a new spirit—they will most surely die; there is no remedy for it.

II. The Almighty speaks as if in this matter of our salvation He had in some wonderful manner parted with His own power and put it into our hands. The text is the voice of a tender Father, most unwilling to punish His children, yet declaring that He *must* punish them, if they continue in their disobedience. And on the other hand, when the same gracious voice alters to a more severe and peremptory tone, still the very threatening is a pledge of His unfailing love to the penitent.

II. True and full repentance is a greater work than some of us may have imagined. It is two great works in one; the first is hating the evil, "casting away all our transgressions;" the other is loving the good, "making us a new heart and a new spirit." The conversion and amendment of sinners is in some mysterious way both God's work and their work; they "work out their own salvation," because it is "God that worketh in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure." The mere hating our former sins is not sufficient, for that may be, as in the case of Judas, in mere despondency, for no good end; in fact, it is what the impenitent transgressor must come to in the next world. But those whom Christ is guiding to true repentance are learning to love Him as well as hate their sins. They are learning to delight in His Presence and rejoice in the feeling that He ever beholds them, to take pleasure in denying themselves for His sake, as a mother takes pleasure in what she does and endures for her child.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. viii., p. 193.

Chap. xviii., ver. 31.—"Make you a new heart and a new spirit."

I. How are we to get a new heart? Some answers come very

readily to our lips. They have been preached over and over again to us; they are quite true, but they do not much help an earnest inquirer. He is left in the same position; he does not know where to turn or what to do, and so goes on until he has given up caring about a new heart. For the first step to a new and better heart is the conviction that we need a new heart. The answer usually given to the inquiry, How am I to get a new heart? is this: It must come from God. This is perfectly true; but it does not help a man much. All good comes from God. But the question is, *How* does it come from God? It is a gift we must seek in a certain way, in accordance with the laws of nature, the laws of our constitution. It must, in some sense, be within our own power; or else we should never have been commanded, as we have been, to make us a new heart and a new spirit.

II. The new heart—that is, a right state of the feelings—consists generally in the dislike and hatred of evil, and the love of goodness and of God. It is a law of our nature that we are ruled and governed by our strongest love. Whatever we care for most in the world, that rules our life; and if we come to love God best of all, whatever our liking for evil might be, it must be driven out, for it can never be gratified, since the love of God rules, and that love does not allow of indulgence in sin. If our feelings towards God are to be changed, if we are to learn to love Him, we must come to know Him, we must come to know something about Him which appeals to our love and reverence. Before Christ the love of God was to a large extent, and in nearly every nation, an impossibility. The civil governments were tyrannies, and the people were slaves, and their religious system was a tyranny, and its service slavery. To Christ we owe our salvation. He taught a truer and more winning faith. He was the one Mediator who took the frightened, hesitating child by the hand, and led him gently up to the throne where sat the great Father, shining forth His infinite tenderness, and the child was converted and forgot to tremble, and began to love and delightedly adore.

III. And if we want to love God, we must, day by day, with Christ to teach us, learn to know our Father, to see His beauty and majesty and saving love; day by day we must try to be with Him, for love comes by nearness; love comes of mutual converse. And this is prayer. Thus we shall come to love God with all our heart, and our soul will get an upward look as the plants feel out to the light; our burdens are lightened, for

there is one sure place to which we may fly for refuge, and there be comforted; by earthly anxieties

"... o'ertaken,
As by some spell divine,
Your cares drop from you, like the needles shaken
From out the gusty pine."

W. PAGE-ROBERTS, *Law and God*, p. 101.

Chap. xviii., ver. 31.—"Why will ye die?"

I. THE nature of our ruin. The death of the body is not meant here. That is inevitable. Natural death will be only the beginning of that most awful death to which our text alludes. (1) This death is not the extinction of existence, thought, feeling, conscience. (2) It is the death of pleasure, hope, and love. (3) It involves exclusion from heaven, from the society of the really great and good, from the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

II. The author of our ruin. Does it proceed primarily and effectually from God's will, or from man's will? The latter, beyond all doubt. The sinner destroys himself. The fact of the sinner's self-destruction is apparent from: (1) the character of the Gospel; (2) the character of man; (3) the character of his future condition.

III. The reason of our ruin. It does not at all depend upon our will whether we shall die in this world. But most of you in reply to this question of the text—Why will ye die?—would have to say: "Because we love the pleasures of the world more than the joys of eternal life; because we desire the approbation of man more than the inheritance of heaven; because we are addicted to the ways of sin,—are not disposed to break off our evil habits; because we have been living in impenitence and unbelief, and have no mind to change our course." The guilt, folly, shame, and ignominy of suicide belong to you.

J. STOUGHTON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1714.

REFERENCES: xviii. 31.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, part ii., p. 197; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 171. xviii. 32.—*Christian Chronicle*, May 3rd, 1883.

Chap. xx., vers. 1-3.—"And it came to pass ... that certain of the elders of Israel came to inquire of the Lord, and sat before me. Then came the word of the Lord unto me, saying, Son of man, speak unto the elders of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Are ye come to inquire of Me? As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you."

I. THERE is no evidence that the elders showed penitence in

coming to inquire of the Lord. Ezekiel did not send the hungry empty away; he alone as God's ambassador refused to answer those who would not leave their sins behind them when they entered into the temple of God. But there is another thing also to be said concerning the visit of these elders: they made a mere convenience of the oracle of God; whereas they had a prophet always amongst them, and might if they pleased have inquired of God often or continually, they did nothing of the kind; but when they found themselves in distress and knew not which way to turn, then they presented themselves before God's prophet.

II. True religion is emphatically a walking with God, not a mere occasional coming to Him. We say that religion is a *life*, and we rightly describe it so—it is not a series of spasmodic efforts, not an inquiry of God now and then, not a coming to His prophet in the sixth year and the sixth month, and again in the seventh year and the fifth month, but an inquiry in all years and all months and all days, a habit of opening our hearts and consciences to Him, and of guiding our conduct by the answers which we are able to obtain.

III. The example of the elders of Israel shows us most plainly the need of leaving our sins behind us when we come to inquire of God. Self-examination and self-condemnation, perhaps, and earnest efforts to forsake the evil and do the good, must ever be the preparations for successful inquiry of God.

IV. Another lesson which this history brings before us is that prayer, or indeed coming to God in any way, must not be made a mere matter of convenience, but must be regarded as a matter of constant spiritual necessity.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 106.

Chap. xx., ver. 25.—"I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live."

THE prophet Ezekiel in the text announces a very solemn judgment of God upon those who refuse truth. The chiefs of the nation are before the prophet, requiring to know how God might be propitiated, so as to bring them again to their country and their homes. Possessed by the Awful Indweller, Ezekiel recapitulates the history of the Jews from the beginning, and amongst God's mingled visitations of wrath and mercy, is described that of the text. There is an obvious difficulty in this passage. That the Almighty should under

any circumstances give false precepts to His people, is at the outset hard to understand.

I. The fact we glean from the prophet's words is this, that God having first promulgated to the Israelites laws of life, upon their indifference to these, gave them laws of death; and the general principle here involved is, that the punishment of transgressing or refusing holy laws, is to have unholy laws assigned us. If we reject truth we shall be called to take falsehood for our guide.

II. We may trace one grand principle pervading and colouring all the visitations of Divine vengeance; the principle is this, that the punishment should in its quality bear a resemblance to the sin. When Adam and Eve presumed to eat the fruit of the tree of good and evil, they were debarred access to the tree of life. The punishment of sin is to preach against sin. And it is obvious how much more striking this preaching becomes, when the penalty inflicted is of a sort to call to remembrance the precise iniquity of which it is the penalty. When, therefore, the sin is the refusing to hear, what should the punishment be but the withdrawal of the power to hear? The closing our eyes to the light of true religion must naturally issue in their being darkened to it for ever.

BISHOP WOODFORD, *Occasional Sermons*, vol. i., p. 227.

REFERENCES: xx. 32.—H. M. Butler, *Harrow School Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 275. xx. 34-38.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1840. xx. 35.—J. Keble, *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p. 405. xx. 41.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 688; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 88. xx. 43.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, part ii., p. 207.

Chap. xx., ver. 49.—**"Then said I, Ah Lord God! they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?"**

NOTHING is more disheartening, if we must believe it to be true, than the language in which some persons talk of the difficulties of the Scriptures, and the absolute certainty that different men will ever continue to understand them differently. It seems desirable that every student of Scripture should know as well as may be, what the exact state of this question is; for if the subject of his studies is really so hopelessly uncertain, it is scarcely possible that his zeal in studying it should not be abated.

I. We read many books written in dead languages, most of them more ancient than any part of the New Testament,

some of them older than several books of the old. We know well enough that these ancient books are not without their difficulties; that time and thought and knowledge, are required to master them; but still we do not doubt that with the exception of particular passages here and there, the true meaning of these books may be discovered with undoubted certainty. When we come to passages which cannot be interpreted or understood, we leave them at once as a blank, but we enjoy no less, and understand with no less certainty, the greatest portions of the book which contain them. And this experience with regard to the works of heathen antiquity, makes it a startling proposition at the outset, when we are told that, with the works of Christian antiquity the case is otherwise.

II. The differences between Christian and Christian by no means arise generally from the difficulty of understanding the Scripture aright, but from disagreement as to some other point, quite independent of the interpretation of the Scriptures, or it may be considerations of another kind, as to the inherent reasonableness of a doctrine. One of the greatest men of our time has declared that in the early part of his life he did not believe in the Divinity of our Lord; but he has stated expressly that he never for a moment persuaded himself that St. Paul or St. John did not believe it; their language he thought was clear enough upon the point, but the notion appeared to him so unreasonable in itself, that he disbelieved it in spite of their authority. The same pains which enable us to understand heathen writings, whose meaning is of infinitely less value to us, will enable us, with God's blessing, to understand the Scriptures also. Supposing us to seek honestly to know God's will, and to pray devoutly for His help to guide us to it, then our study is not vain nor uncertain: the mind of Scripture may be discovered: we may distinguish plainly between what is clear and what is not clear; what is not clear will be found far less in amount, and infinitely less in importance, than what is clear.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 281.

I. THERE are two objections that men of the world make to the preacher; they object to two kinds of religious speech; the speech of religious doctrine, and the speech of religious experience. The Christian creed contains mysterious words, and these are parables both to those who believe and those

who do not. Christian experience expresses itself also in mysterious words that are only understood by Christians. It speaks of conversion, faith, assurance, perseverance, justification, sanctification; and men who have not experienced these states of mind call these words unmeaning; they class them together under the head of *cant*. What the age specially dislikes in the teaching of the Church are these two things: dogma and cant, mystery and unreality. As regards the objection to mystery in religion, perhaps the simplest way of considering this would be to ask whether it is possible to comply with it; whether it is possible to teach any kind of religion which shall be entirely free from mystery. When you bring together these two great mysteries—God and man, the Creator and the creature; the Creator with His Almighty will, and the creature with his mysterious and awful power of rebelling against that will; the Almighty love that wills our happiness and yet that seems ever to will it in vain, and the desperate recklessness of the creature that seems ever bent upon his own destruction; the living and the loving God who heareth prayer, and the changeless, terrible law to which all prayer seems spoken in vain: we find ourselves all surrounded with mysteries; they rise up like mists out of the earth, and gather round the meeting-place where men would draw nigh to God. The mysteries of Christianity are mysteries of all time and all humanity. Those cant phrases that men so dislike, we cannot give them up for just the same reason; they express, not notions, but facts. If a fact be a peculiar one, then the name of it must be peculiar too. Every science, every profession, every art has its own *cant*—has its own technical expressions which are only understood by those who know the science or practise the art. Religion is a science; it is the knowledge of God. Religion is an art; it is the art of holy living, and of happy dying; it must therefore have its *cant* words.

II. But though we may not give up our dogmas, there is a request that all men have a right to make of us, and that we should do well to ponder when they make it. You hearers have a right to say to us teachers, "Take care what parables you give us. Take care how you add your words to God's, and then call both of them His word. Give us God's message. Give us *all* God's message. Give us nothing *but* God's message." You have the right to bid us take good heed that those peculiar religious expressions which we use shall be

real and living on our lips; that they shall not be merely words. BISHOP MAGEE, *The Gospel and the Age*, p. 139.

I. THOSE to whom Ezekiel ministered were not the only beings who have returned this reply to the Divine message—this mocking taunt of unbelief, which to my mind is one of the saddest features of any age in which it may find an expression. In the very first temptation, the father of lies struck out the monster scheme that he and his since then in thousands of instances have adopted to the detriment and destruction of those who have yielded to his influence, and have responded to his power. We find it so to-day. Men scorn the Gospel, presuming to tell us that it is a cunningly devised fable, laughing its threatenings to scorn, and trampling its Divine provisions under foot; or they profess to believe it, and pay no practical regard to it at the same time,—they allow it to have no influence upon their minds—to exert no power upon their spirits.

II. The words of Divine truth are no parables in this sense of the text. It is true that the Gospel is full of parables—parables that are inspired by the Divine purpose and enriched by the Divine love, but not in the sense in which the reproach was implied and the words were uttered in the case of the text. The truths of the Bible are not parables, but eternal realities, Divine revelations for us all.

III. There are truths in which every soul has an interest—that involve the destruction or salvation of every spirit to whom they are addressed. They are truths whose lightest whisper is weighted by Divine meaning and commended by Divine truthfulness; and heaven and earth may pass away, but not a jot or tittle of these till all shall be fulfilled. As you see the wicked pass from the left hand of the Judge into everlasting death you feel that it is no parable. As you hear the crowd of those who call on the rocks and mountains to fall on them, and, though they crush them, to hide them from the presence of Him who sits upon the throne, you feel that it is no parable. And as you see at last the separation of the righteous and the wicked, and those ascending with their Saviour and these departing to reap the dreadful harvest of their own folly, you feel that there is stern truth—no parable there; but that which demands your careful attention and is worthy of your most devout regard. J. P. CHOWN, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 580.

REFERENCES: xx. 49.—H. M. Butler, *Harrow Sermons*, p. 377;

G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 158; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 210; D. Moore, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3155; Bishop Magee, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 252. xxi. 27.—J. Foster, *Lectures*, 2nd series, p. 78. xxi. 31.—*Fountain*, May 5th, 1881. xxiv. 15-18.—A. Mackennal, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 45. xxiv. 16.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 145. xxiv. 19.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, 1st series, p. 442. xxvii. 3.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 64. xxviii. 14.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 361. xxix.—P. Thomson, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. x., p. 397. xxxii. 31, 32.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 327. xxxiii. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 165. xxxiii. 6.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, 3rd series, p. 16.

Chap. xxxiii., ver. 11.—"Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from you evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

THESE words of the text ought to touch us, first in the way of warning and then of encouragement.

I. As to the warning contained in this high doctrine it seems obviously and inevitably to result from it: (1) that our spiritual and everlasting condition is in some mysterious manner placed within our own power—that if we die, spiritually and eternally, it will be our own doing, the consequence of our own wilful presumption and miserable folly. Vain and worse than vain, is the notion which we all so readily cherish, that our spiritual condition is not within our own power and that the Almighty will do with us as He pleases without regard to our own exertions. Certainly He will do with us as He pleases, or, as the Apostle says emphatically, "according to the counsel of His own will." But then it is His irrevocable will and counsel, that, without holiness, no man shall be admitted to His beatific presence. He has no pleasure in the death of Him that dieth, yet if men turn not from their evil ways they must and will die; it is not God's choice but their own—for themselves. (2) Another great warning in the doctrine of the text is that we have before us no alternative but either to turn or perish. Hence the necessity of our examining ourselves so strictly, and turning so resolutely from all that we find amiss in us. "Lust when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin: sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.

II. Consider again what encouragement and consolation to all humble and contrite hearts is contained in these divine words. Here we see (1) that, sinful and undeserving as we are, our Heavenly Father watches over us with the utmost possible tenderness and anxiety; and not merely this, but He has taken

great pains to impress on our hearts the conviction that He does so watch over us; (2) that whoever turns from any evil way, any wrong course, either of sin committed or of duty neglected, has unquestionably God's blessing on him; has the best possible pledge and test that he is so far in the right way —a pledge and test doubtless more to be depended on than any external flattery or internal feeling.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. iv., p. 233.

REFERENCES: xxxiii. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1795; J. Oswald Dykes, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 253; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 159. xxxiii. 22.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 6.

Chap. xxxiii., vers. 30-32.—**"Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against Thee by the walls, and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another . . . saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord," etc.**

THE experience which the young priest Ezekiel had to bear among the captives in Babylon is the same in some degree that every serious preacher of God's word has had to expect. The methods of rejection may be various, but the act is the same; it is rejection by men. The number who may be induced to hear his preaching and knocking is much larger than the number of those who really intend to yield the obedience of faith.

I. Consider this melancholy fact. Many hear the word of the Lord, and hear it with interest, who will obey it not. It is quite wonderful how men hear what is well spoken with pleasure, and yet remain quite unaffected by it in their characters and lives. An unconverted man, a disobedient hearer, sometimes is quicker to appreciate the force of a discourse than a converted and an obedient hearer is. The heart of man easily coins self-flattering hopes out of these passing emotions which religious discourses and appeals may excite. "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

II. That is the character. Now what is the reason of it? Their heart goes after their gain. Every man who is to follow Christ is to forsake all that he has and become Christ's disciple. So long as their hearts are going after their gains they are deaf, they are blind, to the true meaning of the Gospel. They are absolutely insensible to the whole drift of Christ and His Apostles. They are seeking their own things, and therefore the

word has no effect upon them. So long as the heart hankers after the treasures or the pleasures of this world, all the church-going, all the appreciation of this preacher or that, goes for nothing, accomplishes nothing, that has fruit in everlasting life.

D. FRASER, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 168.

REFERENCES: xxxiii. 30-33.—W. M. Punshon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 259. xxxiii. 32.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 264.

Chap. xxxiii., vers. 32, 33.—"And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not," etc.

THESE are the words of the Lord God to the prophet Ezekiel, words in which He describes the effect of the prophet's preaching upon the children of his people. Ezekiel had by this time become a successful preacher. He was the great sensation of the day; men thought it must be the proper thing to go and hear him, to sit lowly before him, to listen with rapt attention to the impetuous torrent of his words, and when they went away to discuss his message in the gates or on the housetops. But their heart was not touched, nor was their life affected; it was their imagination that was fascinated, and their understanding that was pleased.

I. This state of things is exactly reproduced in the case of every popular preacher. Men whose lives are cruel or impure, —whose hearts are covetous, whose thoughts are bitter,—crowd to hear the preacher of the day, because his words are sweet, because his eloquence is full of melody, because they feel themselves for the moment fascinated, captivated—carried out of, lifted above, themselves.

II. Ezekiel in his popularity is a type, not only of all lesser preachers, but emphatically of Him who is the great Prophet and Preacher of the world, the Master of all ages, the Incarnate Word of God. A very lovely song it is which the Saviour sings; no poet, no prophet, no bard, ever sung or ever dreamed, or ever even strove (and striving failed) to express anything half so sweet, so full, so soul-subduing as the Gospel of the grace of God. And He that sings it hath a very pleasant voice, for sweeter is the voice of Christ than the voice of any angel or archangel, and of any of the heavenly choirs—grander in itself and sweeter far is it to us, because it is a Brother's voice, and we can feel the sympathy, we can understand the finest, softest shades of meaning which are woven through the melody. Therefore does the world love to listen to His message of

salvation, to sit at the feet of Christ, to call Him Great Master, to listen to His words with pleased attention. They *hear* His words, but *do* them not. Never shall His voice sound so pleasant, never His song so lovely, as when He shall lead His own to the eternal bowers, and those who are not His shall be shut out for ever. Yet this last unspeakable woe must be *our* portion, if the Gospel be to us but as a very lovely song—if our attitude towards Christ be one of admiration, not of imitation—if we hear His words but do them not.

R. WINTERBOTHAM, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 87.

REFERENCES: xxxiii. 33.—E. Paxton Hood, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 129. xxxiv. 4.—A. G. Maitland, *Ibid.*, vol. xi., p. 392. xxxiv. 10.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, 3rd series, p. 16. xxxiv. 12.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 204. xxxiv. 26.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Ascension Day to Trinity*, p. 27; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i., No. 26; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 55; F. W. Brown, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 75. xxxiv. 27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1462. xxxiv. 29.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 160; J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i., p. 108.

Chap. xxxiv., ver. 29.—"And I will raise up for them a plant of renown."

I. IT is renowned for its beauty.
II. It is renowned for its fruitfulness.
III. It is renowned for its virtues.
IV. It is renowned for its fragrance.
V. It is renowned for its shade.
VI. It is renowned for its permanence.

G. BROOKS, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 160.

REFERENCES: xxxiv. 30, 31.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1807. xxxiv. 31.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 15th series, p. 205; J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 345. xxxv. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 536; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 48. xxxvi. 11.—*Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 288.

Chap. xxxvi., vers. 16, 17.—"Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man," etc.

I. THIS portion of Scripture, extending onwards from the sixteenth verse, presents an epitome or outline of the Gospel. (1) In ver. 17 we have man sinning. (2) In ver. 18 we have man suffering. (3) In ver. 19 man appears an object of mercy, but I had pity. (4) In ver. 22 man is an object of free mercy—mercy without merit; I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel. (5) In ver. 24 man's salvation is resolved on. (6) In

ver. 25 man is justified. (7) In vers. 26, 27, man is renewed and sanctified. (8) In ver. 28 man is restored to the place and privileges which he forfeited by his sins.

II. Notice the party who is commissioned to deliver God's message. "Son of man," says the Lord. "Son of man" is so constantly sounded both in the ears of Ezekiel and in ours that it forces on our attention this remarkable fact that God deals with man through the instrumentality of man, and by men communicates His will to men. In this arrangement observe—(1) The kindness of God to man; (2) the honour conferred on man; (3) the wisdom of God.

T. GUTHRIE, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, p. 1.

Chap. xxxvi., ver. 17.—"Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way, and by their doings."

I. LOOK at man sinning. "Ye have defiled the land." The text sets sin before us as a defilement, and it is the only thing that in the eye of God does deform and defile us.

II. Look at the nature of the defilement. (1) It is internal. (2) It is universal. (3) It is incurable.

T. GUTHRIE, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, p. 23.

LEAVING the question of original, to speak of actual, sin we remark:—

I. Apart from derived sin, we have personal sins to answer for.

II. The guilt of these actual sins is our own.

T. GUTHRIE, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, p. 43.

REFERENCE: xxxvi. 17.—T. Guthrie, *Gospel in Ezekiel*, p. 42.

Chap. xxxvi., vers. 18, 19.—"Wherefore I poured My fury upon them . . . and I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed through the countries," etc.

ASSUMING that God is love, it may be asked, How does that harmonise with the text? How is it to be reconciled with words where God represents Himself as pouring down His fury like a thunder-shower, and scattering His people in a storm of indignation, as light and worthless chaff blown away upon the wind. How, it may be asked, does this consist with God's love and mercy? Now, there is no greater mistake than to imagine that God, as a God of justice and a God of mercy, stands in antagonism to Himself. It is not mercy, but injustice,

which is irreconcilable with justice. It is cruelty, not justice, that stands opposed to mercy. Like two streams, which unite their waters to form a common river, justice and mercy are combined in the work of redemption. On Calvary, mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other. Observe—

I. That God is slow to punish. He does punish; He shall punish; with reverence be it spoken, He must punish. Yet no hand of clock goes so slow as God's hand of vengeance. Where, when God's anger has burned hottest, was it ever known that judgment trod on the heels of sin? A period always intervenes, room is given for remonstrance on God's part and repentance upon ours. The stroke of judgment is indeed like the stroke of lightning, irresistible, fatal; it kills—kills in the twinkling of an eye. But the clouds from which it flashes are slow to gather, and thicken by degrees; and he must be deeply engaged with the pleasures, or engrossed in the business, of the world, whom the flash and peal surprise. Heeded or unheeded, many are the warnings you get from God.

II. Observe how God punished His ancient people. Look at Judah sitting amid the ruins of Jerusalem, her temple without a worshipper and her streets choked with the dead; look at that bound, weeping, bleeding remnant of a nation, toiling on its way to Babylon, and may I not warn you with the Apostle: "If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He spare not thee"?

T. GUTHRIE, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, p. 60.

ALTHOUGH the permission of sin is a mystery, the fact of its punishment is no mystery at all; for while every answer to the question, How did God permit sin? leaves us unsatisfied, to my mind nothing is plainer than this, that, whatever was His reason for permitting it to exist, God could not permit it to exist unpunished. In proof of this, I observe—

I. The truth of God requires the punishment of sin. "Line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little," God has recorded His irrevocable resolution, not in one but in a hundred passages, and reiterated in a thousand ways the awful sentence: "The soul that sinneth it shall die."

II. The love of God requires that sin should be punished. Divine love is no blind divinity: that love being as wise as tender, sinners may rest assured, that out of mere pity to them, God will neither sacrifice the interests, nor peril the happiness,

of His people. Love herself,—bleeding, dying, redeeming love—with her own hand will bar the door of heaven, and from its happy, holy precincts exclude all that could hurt or defile.

III. Unless sin is to be awfully punished, the language of Scripture appears extravagant.

T. GUTHRIE, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, p. 79.

Chap. xxxvi., ver. 22.—"Therefore say unto the house of Israel, . . . I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for Mine holy Name's sake."

THE text divides itself into two branches: first, what does not; secondly, what does; move God to save us. To the first question our answer is—Not anything in us; to the second—His regard to His own holy Name.

I. The doctrine that God is not moved to save man by any merit or excellence of his, is a truth of the highest importance and consequence to sinners. Man must be emptied of self before he can be filled with grace. We must be stripped of our rags, before we can be clothed with righteousness; we must be unclothed, that we may be clothed upon; wounded, that we may be healed; killed, that we may be made alive; buried in disgrace, that we may rise in grace.

II. It is as important for the saint as for the sinner to remember that he is not saved through personal merit or for his own sake. When age has stiffened its bark and fibres, if you bend a branch into a new direction, it is long before it loses the tendency to resume its old position. Even so, when God has laid hands upon us, and grace has given our earthly soul a heavenward bent, how prone it is to start back again! Who, that has endeavoured to keep his heart with diligence, has not felt and mourned over the tendency to be working out a righteousness of his own, to be pleased with himself, and, by taking some satisfaction from his own merits, to undervalue those of Christ?

III. This doctrine, while it keeps the saint humble, will help to make him holy. As the tree grows best skyward that grows most downward, the lower the saint grows in humility. the higher he grows in holiness. Piety and pride are not less opposed to each other than light and darkness.

T. GUTHRIE, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, p. 116.

Chap. xxxvi., ver. 22.—"I do this . . . for Mine holy Name's sake."

IN entering upon the question, What moved God to save man? let us—

I. Attend to the expression "My Name's sake." This is a

most comprehensive term. It indicates much more that what, in common language, is involved in a name. The Name of God comprehends everything which directly or remotely affects the Divine honour and glory.

II. We are to understand that the motive which moved God to save man, was regard to His own glory. Grace glorifies man, no doubt; but for what purpose? that he may glorify God. It saves man, but saves him that he may sing, not his own praises, but a Saviour's. It exalts man, but exalts him that, like an exhalation, sun-drawn from the ground and raised to heaven, each of us may form a sparkling drop in the bow which encircles the head that God crowns with glory, and man once crowned with thorns.

III. Observe, that in saving man for His "holy Name's sake," or for His own honour and glory, God exhibits the mercy, holiness, love, and other attributes of the Godhead. The truth is, that God saves man for much the same reasons as at first He made him. The whole fabric of creation appears to prove that Jehovah delights in the evolution of His powers, in the display of His wisdom, love, and goodness; and just as it is to the delight which God enjoys in the exercise of them that we owe this beautiful creation, so it is to His delight in the exercise of His pity, love, and mercy, that we owe salvation, with all its blessings.

T. GUTHRIE, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, p. 99.

Chap. xxxvi., ver. 23.—"And I will sanctify My great Name, which was profaned among the heathen."

I. THE mercy of God is glorified in redemption.

II. In redemption, God is glorified in the complete discomforture of all His and our enemies. (1) He is glorified by Satan's defeat. (2) He is glorified by the time and manner of it. (3) He is glorified in the instrument of that defeat. T. GUTHRIE, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, p. 167.

Chap. xxxvi., vers. 23, 24.

PASSING over the special application of these words to the Jews and looking at them in their prophetical connection with the scheme of redemption, I remark—

I. That God might have vindicated His honour and sanctified His Name in our destruction. Two methods of glorifying His Name are open to God. He is free to choose either; but by the one or the other way He will exact His full tale of

glory from every man. In Egypt, for instance, He was glorified in the high-handed destruction of His enemies; and in the same land, by the high-handed salvation of His people. He might, at the fall, have vindicated His justice by swift and unsparing vengeance—by destroying the whole human family. He did so, in the case of fallen angels. He might have meted out the same measure to fallen men.

II. God sanctifies His Name and glorifies Himself in our redemption. It is easy to destroy—to destroy character, virtue, life, anything. It needs but a devil to ruin the spirit, but it needs a Divinity to redeem it. It needs but a villain to steal virtue, it needs a Divine power to restore the stolen jewel. As man's glory is more illustrated by curing than by killing, so God's glory is more pre-eminent in our redemption than it had been in our final and everlasting ruin.

III. The scheme of redemption is eminently illustrative of the attributes of Jehovah. It illustrates (1) His power, (2) His wisdom, (3) His holiness, (4) His justice.

T. GUTHRIE, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, pp. 137, 151.

Chap. xxxvi., ver. 24.—"I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land."

I. IN carrying out the work of redemption, God will call His people out of the world.

II. The power of Divine grace is strikingly displayed in this effectual calling.

III. God will make up the number of His people. "I will gather you out of all countries."

IV. We are assured that God will bring all His people to glory, by the fact that His own honour, as well as their welfare, is concerned in the matter.

T. GUTHRIE, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, p. 185.

Chap. xxxvi., ver. 25.—"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean."

I. GOD'S people are not chosen because they are holy; they are chosen that they may become holy.

II. In redemption, the saved are not justified by themselves, but by God.

III. We are not justified or cleansed from the guilt of sin through the administration or efficacy of any outward ordinance.

IV. We are justified, or cleansed from the guilt of sin by

the blood of Christ. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission."

T. GUTHRIE, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, pp. 205, 224.

REFERENCE: xxxvi. 25.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1921.

Chap. xxxvi., ver. 26.—"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh."

I. THE old heart is taken away and a new one put in its place. The substitution of one heart for another implies an entire change in the character and current of our affections. Now a change may be simply a reform, or extending farther, it may pass into a revolution. The spiritual change, which we call conversion, is not a mere reform. It is a revolution. It changes the heart, the habits, the eternal destiny of an immortal being. For the old mischievous laws which it repeals, it introduces a new code of statutes; it changes the reigning dynasty, wrenches the sceptre from a usurper's hand, and banishing him forth of the kingdom, in restoring the throne to God, restores it to its rightful monarch.

II. Consider the view which our text gives of the natural heart. It is a heart of stone. "I will take the stony heart out of your flesh." Notice some of the characteristic properties of a stone. (1) A stone is cold. But what stone so cold as that in man's breast? Sin has quenched a fire that once burned bright and holy there, and has left nothing now on that chill hearth, but embers and ashes—cold as death. (2) A stone is hard. Fire melts wax, but not stone; water softens clay, but not stone; a hammer bends the stubborn iron, but not stone. Stone resists these influences; and emblem of a heart crushed, but not sanctified by affliction, it may be shattered into fragments or ground to powder, yet its atoms are as hard as ever. (3) A stone is dead. It has no vitality, no feeling, no power of motion. It lies where it is laid; speak to it, it returns no answer; weep to it, it sheds no tears; image of a lost and loved one, it feels not the grief that itself can move. How many sit in the house of God as unmoved! Careless as spectators who have no concern in what takes place before them, they take no interest in anything that was done on Calvary; one would think it is of stones, and yet it is of living men that these words are spoken: "Having eyes, they see not; having ears, they hear not; neither do they understand." T. GUTHRIE, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, p. 268.

Chap. xxxvi., ver. 26 (with 2 Cor. v., ver. 17, and Rev. xxi., ver. 5).

I. HUMAN hearts unappeasably cry out after change. Something new we all need, and because we need, we crave for it; and what we crave after, we hope for. The old we have tried, and it is not enough. In the future there may be what we need, and so long as there is a future, there is hope; but the past is dead. Now the best lesson which the years can teach us is, perhaps, this one, that the new thing we need is, not a new world, but a new self. No change can count for much to a man save one which changes him.

II. At this point the Gospel meets us. It is the singular pretension of the Christian Gospel that it does make men new. It professes to alter character, not as all other religious and ethical systems in the world have done, by mere influence of reason or of motives, or by a discipline of the flesh; it professes to alter human character by altering human nature. The Gospel is a message from Him who made us, that He is among us re-making us. Out of the fact of the Incarnation springs the hope of our renewal. God now is not outside of mankind, but inside. From the inside He can work and does work, renewingly. A race which includes God need not despair of Divine life; it can be divinely re-created from within itself. "The Head of every man is Christ." He that is in Christ is a new creature. Attach yourself to Him; hang on by Him. He is God in man, renewing man; and He will renew you in this new year.

III. Let us stir ourselves up to compare the life we are this day leading with the life we should lead were we made new by the Holy Ghost. Set the one against the other. Spiritual things are distasteful, and we drag ourselves to religious duty; we ought to rejoice in the Lord and run in His pleasant paths. This world absorbs and conquers us; we ought to rule it and use it for heaven. Internal restlessness and dissatisfaction with ourselves gnaw our hearts, but the saints have peace. "A new heart will I give you." Do we not need it? Shall we not, every one of us, go to this daring much-promising Man, who claims to regenerate his fellows, and say: "Never men needed this renewing more than we do. Give us a new temper and a new spirit; yea, a new self, Lord, like Thyself."

IV. Change the man and you change his world. The new self will make all around it as good as new, though no actual

change should pass on it; for, to a very wonderful extent, a man creates his own world.

J. Oswald Dykes, *Sermons*, p. 249.

I. When God gives a new heart, our affections are engaged in religion. The Gospel is accommodated to our nature; its light is adapted to our darkness; its mercy to our misery; its pardon to our guilt; its comforts to our griefs, and in substituting the love of Christ for the love of sin, in giving us an object to love, it meets our constitution and satisfies the strongest cravings of our nature. It engages our affections, and in taking away an old heart, supplies its place with a new one and a better.

II. Consider the new heart. It mainly consists in a change of the affections as they regard spiritual objects. In obedience to a Divine impulse, their course is not only in a different, but in a contrary, direction; for the grace of God works such a complete change of feeling, that what was once hated you now love, and what was once loved you now loathe; you fly from what you once courted, and pursue what you once shunned.

III. In conversion God gives a new spirit. By this change (1) the understanding and judgment are enlightened; (2) the will is renewed; (3) the temper and disposition are changed and sanctified.

IV. In conversion God gives a heart of flesh. In conversion a man gets (1) a warm heart; (2) a soft heart; (3) a living heart.

V. By conversion man is ennobled.

T. Guthrie, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, p. 287.

References: xxxvi. 26.—T. Guthrie, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, p. 247; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 62; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 212; vol. viii., No. 456; vol. xix., No. 1129; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 230; D. B. James, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 125. xxxvi. 26, 27.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1046; J. Sherman, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 13.

Chap. xxxvi., ver. 27.—"I will . . . cause you to walk in My statutes, and keep My judgments, and do them."

In considering the new life which the believer lives in obedience to the law of God, I remark:

I. It is a willing obedience. Many movements take place in the universe independent of any will but that of God. The sap ascends the tree, the planets revolve round the sun, the stars rise and set in the heavens, the tides flow and ebb upon our shores, and nature walks in God's statutes, keeping His

judgments and doing them, moved to obedience by no will but His. So soon, however, as, leaving inaminate matter below, we ascend into those regions where mind or even instinct and matter are united, we discover a beautiful and benevolent law, by virtue of which God at once secures the happiness and provides for the welfare of His creatures. He so orders it that their will is in perfect harmony with their work; their inclinations with their interests; and their instincts with he functions which they are called on to perform. The nature of the redeemed is so accommodated to the state of redemption, their wishes are so fitted to their wants, their hopes to their prospects, their aspirations to their honours, and their will to their works, that they would be less content to return to polluted pleasures than the beautiful butterfly to be stripped of its silken wings, and condemned to pass its days amid the old foul garbage, its former food.

II. This is a progressive obedience. To "walk" is expressive of progress in grace. (1) In this image God's people find comfort and encouragement. (2) This image stimulates to exertion, as well as comforts under failure.

III. This willing and progressive obedience is the sign and seal of salvation. The descent of the Spirit is still the evidence of sonship; its sign, however, is not a dove perched upon the heads of God's people, but the dove nestled within their hearts. By His Spirit God creates them "anew in Christ Jesus unto good works;" and by these—by the fruits of a holy life, by the joys of a Holy Ghost, by the advancing stages of a holy progress, His Spirit witnesses with their spirit that they are sons of God. A witness this as certain, and therefore as satisfactory, as the voice of the skies, or the verdict of final judgment.

T. GUTHRIE, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, p. 329.

Chap. xxxvi., ver. 27.—"And I will put My Spirit within you."

I. THE Holy Spirit is the great agent in conversion and sanctification. Man cannot be saved unless elected, nor elected without the Father; nor saved unless redeemed, nor redeemed without the Son; nor saved unless converted, nor converted without the Spirit. Our necessities are those of the cripple—of that man who, for thirty years, sat uncured by Bethesda's pool, nor took his anxious eyes off the water as he waited for its first stir and ruffle. Many a time the cripple had seen the sudden spring, and heard the loud plunge, as some neighbour

flashed into the water; and as the cured left the scene, many a time had he followed them with envious eyes. Even so, although seated by the fountain, where sins are lost and sinners washed, we need some one, so to speak, to help us in. In the words of Paul we are "without strength," and it is to help us to seek, to believe in, to love—in one word, to embrace the Saviour—that God puts His Spirit within us. For this end He fulfils the promise, "My grace shall be sufficient for thee," and my strength made perfect in weakness.

II. God's Spirit is not only given to His people, but dwells in them. Speaking of the man that loves Him, our Lord said, "We will come unto him." This promise is one which He fulfils in the daily communications of His word and spirit. Earth has no lovers who meet so often as Jesus and His bride. The lowliest and poorest Christian God honours with daily visits.

T. GUTHRIE, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, p. 313.

REFERENCES: xxxvi. 30, 31.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 291. xxxvi. 32.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 233.

Chap. xxxvi., ver. 36.—"I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it."

I. THE text announces a most important truth.

II. This truth imparts certain comforts to a true Christian. (1) Through his confidence in this truth the believer commits all his earthly cares to God. (2) Through his confidence in the truth of the text the believer is sustained amid the trials of life. (3) Through his confidence in the truth of the text the believer cheerfully hopes and patiently waits for heaven.

III. Both nature and providence illustrate the truth of my text.

T. GUTHRIE, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, p. 410.

REFERENCE: xxxvi. 36.—J. Bardsley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 305.

Chap. xxxvi., vers. 36, 37.

I PRAYER is founded on knowledge. Before we can speak to God we must know God. "How shall they call," the Apostle asks, "on Him in whom they have not believed?" Even the prayer of the heathen, so far as it is prayer, rests upon knowledge. (1) Let the man who would pray aright begin by studying his Bible. Let him first acquaint himself with God, and then speak to Him. The Word of God tells us in a thousand manners what He is in Himself, and what He is in His

doings towards the children of men. He who would ask of God must first know God, and he must carry that knowledge into the asking. He must never ask of God anything which it would contradict the character of God to grant. The prayer which presupposes knowledge must also be a prayer which recognizes and remembers it. (3) In Christ, God is revealed; and upon the knowledge of Christ, therefore, is prayer to God founded. The words with which Christian supplication is always winged and speeded—*through Jesus Christ our Lord*—are a perpetual memento of that first condition of prayer, that it be founded on the true knowledge of God, and carry that knowledge with it to the mercy-seat of God's Presence.

II. Prayer founded on knowledge is prompted by desire The man who asks of God must desire too.

III. Prayer, founded on knowledge and prompted by desire, must be bounded by promise. The promise of which we speak is no single, separate utterance; no number, no multitude, of bare, literal engagements, which must be found somewhere in the bond, and then rehearsed by page and clause, as the justification of the particular demand. The promise of God, like the revelation of God, like the counsel of God, like the character of God, is at once ample to magnificence and simple even to unity. There is no limit to prayer but promise, and no limit to promise but the soul's good.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Voices of the Prophets*, p. 158.

Chap. xxxvi., ver. 37.—"I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

THE text summons us to prayer. Constant prayer, unceasing watchfulness are what our interests imperatively demand. These the Christian life requires, and these the crown of redemption rewards.

I. Nature itself teaches us to pray. Like our intuitive belief in the existence of the soul, or in man's responsibility, there seems to be lodged in every man's breast, what I may call an instinct to pray, and an intuitive belief in the efficacy of prayer. Prayer must be natural, because it is universal. Man is, as it were, instinctively moved to cast himself into the arms of God, to seek Divine help in times of danger, and in times of sorrow to weep on the bosom of a Father who is in heaven.

II. Notice some difficulties connected with this duty. (1) The decrees of God, say some, render prayer useless. Are not all things, they ask, fixed by these decrees—irrevocably fixed?

This objection is not honestly, at least not intelligently, entertained by any man. For, if the objection is good against prayer, it is good against many things besides. If it stops action in the direction of prayer,—it ought to stop the wheels of our daily business. If a good objection against prayer, it is an equally good objection to sowing, ploughing, taking meat or medicine, and a thousand other things. (2) Others, more earnest and honest, reading that "without faith it is impossible to please God," say that from want of faith, their prayers must be useless. Most false reasoning. The Apostle says, "I will that men pray everywhere." "God will have all men to be saved." We take the simple word, nor trouble ourselves about the metaphysics of the question.

III. Prayer must be earnest. Prayers without wishes are like birds without wings; while the eagle soars away to heaven, these never leave the ground. If you would have your prayers accepted, they must be arrows shot from the heart.

IV. Prayer is powerful. Prayer changes impotence into omnipotence; for, commanding the resources of divinity, there is nothing it cannot do, and there is nothing it need want. It has just two limits. The first is that its range is confined to the promises; the second, that God will grant or deny our requests as is best for His glory and our good.

V. Prayer is confident. "Jesus, our High Priest, has entered within the veil, and having reconciled us to God, we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus."

T. GUTHRIE, *The Gospel in Ezekiel*, p. 369.

REFERENCES: xxxvi. 37.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii. No. 138; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 50; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 187. xxxvi. 37, 38.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1304; J. Sherman, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 347.

Chap. xxxvii., ver. 3.—"And He said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, Thou knowest."

I. WE may take Ezekiel's vision as a pledge that God does not abandon a good cause, however dark may appear its prospects at any particular time. There are in the world evils so great that we are tempted to think their cure hopeless. God knows when and how the difficulties which beset holy enterprises will be cleared away. The Maker of mankind does not despise the work of His own hand; the day will come in His own good time when there will be a shaking, and the bones will come together,

and a breath will pass into the lifeless forms, and they will live and stand upon their feet.

II. Still more deep and impressive should be the comfort derived from this prophetic vision when we apply it not to any outward or professional work in which we are engaged, but to the personal work of bringing over our hearts and lives into conformity with Christ's will. When we look within ourselves and consider our own state before God, we may well repeat the question, Can these bones live? Fallings away, humiliating defeats, abandonment or forgetfulness of holy purposes in the presence of temptation are no doubt sufficiently depressing; and the true remedy is to have faith in God, to believe that His Spirit will breathe a new life into our failing energies, and in that belief diligently to seek Him.

III. This great passage implies the current belief of the resurrection of the body, all the more as the application is figurative, and made to strengthen a disheartened people. Thus, though the passage was not intended to teach the Jewish captives the truth of the Resurrection, yet it is interesting as one of the signs that the hope of immortality was gradually unfolded and made clear to God's people under the Old Testament. We may receive the vision as a Divine pledge that God's blessing reaches beyond the grave, that His power will still surround us, and His Spirit be breathed into us, in that unknown world to which we all are hastening.

G. E. Cotton, *Sermons to English Congregations in India*, p. 33[2].

Chap. xxxvii., ver. 3.—"Can these bones live?"

I. All men are spiritually dead. (1) They are destitute of the principle of spiritual life. (2) They are insensible to the beauties and attractions of the spiritual world. (3) They are incompetent to discharge the functions of holy beings. (4) They are under the dominion of sinful propensities.

II. No created power can communicate spiritual life to men.

III. It is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit to quicken the spiritually dead. (1) His influence is obtained in answer to prayer. (2) It operates through the instrumentality of the word. (3) It produces faith in Christ. (4) The mode of His working is inscrutable.

G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 294.

References: xxxvii. 1-10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 582; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 74; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i.,

p. 427. xxxvii. 1-14.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 384. xxxvii. 3.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 209; H. P. Liddon, *Expository Sermons and Outlines on the Old Testament*, p. 278; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 294. xxxvii. 10.—J. Budgen, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 236. xxxvii. 11, 12, 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1676. xxxvii. 15-17.—*Pulpit Analyst*, vol. ii., p. 457. xxxvii. 37.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 103. xl. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No 1578. xliii. 12.—*Ibid.*, No. 1618. xliii. 15.—J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 185.

Chap. xlvi., ver. 9.—"He that entereth in by the way of the north gate to worship, shall go out by the way of the south gate," etc.

EZEKIEL's temple is designed to set forth the order, grandeur, and beauty of the Church in its vigour, and the life that shall go out from it in floods all over the world. What can be meant, then, by declaring regarding the temple that those who go in by the south door shall go out by the north, and that those who go in by the north shall go out by the south. A man may enter either by the north door or the south. There is perfect liberty here. But there is no liberty as to what he shall do after that. The rest is fixed. Absolute restriction begins at once. He shall go right through. He shall make for the "over against." Has not this a very plain meaning for us? We should not sit still at that side of religion which first attracted us, not keep going back over the old ground, but strive to go through the whole breadth of religion. Every man who enters on a religious experience must go from that first experience to the opposite experience.

Let us turn this thought in three directions,—Truth, Worship, Life.

I. Truth. The truth of God has many sides, and there are truths which stand as opposites; whole classes of truths stand as opposites. A healthy religious life seeks to lay hold of both of these. (1) Religion embraces truths that are mysterious and truths that are clear and plain. The plain truths need the vast and unsearchable to give them force. Your soul wants a most important part of education, if it has no experience of lying defeated and prostrate before the great ultimate mysteries. From the side of the mysterious, then, reach over to all the plainest and simplest things. One may have studied the mysteries long and not know. A man may know the stars better than his own fields. From the side of the plain reach over to the great mysteries; come out of your house and your

workshop, and stand beneath the vast concave and wonder. (2) There are truths of theory and truths of practice. Let the one class be added to the other.

II. Worship. Worship has many sides. It also abounds in opposites. Such are sorrow and joy, hope and fear, prayer and praise, supplication and promise or resolve. How frequent it is for men to cling to one side of worship. (1) How many enter at the north door of entreaty, and never really approach the south door of joy and praise. (2) There are those who find it easy to be glad and grateful. They imagine that the sacrifice of sorrow is one they are not called to bring. He that does not know the secret of grief must be very much on the surface of things. If he wants to get down into reality, he must set himself to those thoughts that produce penitence.

III. Moral and spiritual life. (1) How common it is to deny feeling, and exalt conduct and action. But feeling, which many depreciate, is the proper basis of action and conduct. (2) Devotion and righteousness in like manner stand over against each other. If any one feels himself more inclined to the one side than the other, he should earnestly and resolutely resist this and press over to the other side. Let the praying man become practical, the practical become devout. To oblige oneself to strive for the opposite would initiate the most wholesome line of effort, and bring on great and wholly unexpected results. It would expel many a doubt, brace up many a slack life, and clear many a horizon.

J. LECKIE, *Sermons Preached at Ibrox*, p. 210.

REFERENCES: xlvi. 10.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 136. xlvii. 1-8.—S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 32. xlvii. 1-12.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 102. xlvii. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1054. xlvii. 8.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxxi., No. 1852.

Chap. xlvii., ver. 9.—"And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh."

WE take the holy waters mentioned in the text to be the emblems of that wondrous scheme of mercy, perfected by the atonement of Christ, made vital by the Ever-present Spirit, and adapted to the salvation of the world.

I. Notice the *source* of the waters. There is said to have been a very copious fountain on the west side of Jerusalem.

The prudent Hezekiah, foreseeing that in a time of siege, an enemy might cut off its streams, conducted them by a secret aqueduct into the city. It may be, that there was some subtle connection of thought between this fountain and the vision which floated before the senses of Ezekiel, as there was a stream from this same fountain into the temple, and from the foundations of the holy house the holy waters sprang. Be this as it may, the truth is significantly told, that while through the temple come to us the tidings of our peace, the blessing itself does not originate there, but is conveyed to it from a source invisible and afar.

II. Notice the *progress* of the waters, thus flowing from the foundations of the temple. In the context the progress of these waters is said to have been gradual and constant. And this is only a description of the progress of the Gospel of Christ. There are two thoughts suggested by this gradual and constant progress of the Gospel. The first encourages our faith; the second reminds us of our responsibility.

III. Notice the *efficacy* of these waters. The places to which they flowed are striking. They did not wend their course to spots that were only slightly defective and easily healed. They flowed "into the desert and into the sea"—"into the desert" amidst whose endless sands no streams had flowed before; "into the sea," the Dead Sea in whose sad and sluggish waters nothing which had breath could live. Thus their mission was both to supply that which was lacking, and to cleanse that which was impure. And this is true of the Gospel of Christ. There is no desert of worldiness which the Gospel cannot turn into a garden; there is no Dead Sea of error which the Gospel cannot purge of its pollution, and change into a receptacle of life.

W. Morley Punshon, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 155.

Chap. xlvii., ver. 9.—"And everything shall live, whither the river cometh."

Notice: I. The spring of this life-giving river. It had its spring out of sight; the fountain head was invisible, but it proceeded out of the sanctuary of God. Its waters flowed by the altar of sacrifice; they touched it; they crossed its shadow; they got permission, as it were, to go on their way from the altar. How pointedly this tells of the Holy Spirit, the river of the water of eternal life, proceeding out of the

throne of God! It is God's own essence, communicated to us men over the cross of Jesus, for His name's sake.

II. The size of the river. In its growing tide we have symbolised the gift of the Holy Spirit (1) to the patriarchs; (2) to the pious Israelites, such as Joshua and Caleb and the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal, and especially to the prophets: (3) during the ministry of Christ; (4) on the Day of Pentecost.

III. The service of the river. "Everything shall live whither the river cometh." It shall come into hearts hard as the nether millstone, and soften them; unto families poor as beggars, and enrich them; unto neighbourhoods that have been desert, and cause them to rejoice and blossom as the rose; unto natures which have been unprofitable, and make them plenteously to bring forth the fruit of good works.

J. BOLTON, *Family Treasury*, Dec. 1863, p. 307.

CONSIDER: I. The bearing of the Gospel on men's social condition. (1) It is capable of the clearest proof that Christianity is the only thing that has given purity and loveliness to the household. The Lord Jesus has revolutionised, if not created, family life. (2) The religion of Jesus has promoted kindness between man and man.

II. Consider the influence of the Gospel upon civil liberty. The Bible contains no treatise on civil government, but its principles lay the axe to the root of every form of despotism. Jesus has taught us not only to assert freedom of conscience for ourselves, but to respect and defend its exercise by others.

III. Look at the department of literature, and you will see how, when the river of the Gospel has flowed into a nation, it has quickened that also into richer growth. Avowedly religious writers, of course, have been indebted to it for their all; but even those who have had no directly spiritual aim have been largely beholden to its quickening power.

IV. Look at the influence of Christianity upon science. Physical sciences have made the greatest progress in countries where Protestant Christianity has taken the strongest hold. In standing up for liberty of conscience and of opinion for themselves, the witnesses for religious truth have won also for science the right to hold and teach its own deductions and beliefs. The Gospel teaches men to follow truth at every hazard, and every new triumph of science will in the end give a new impulse to spiritual religion.

V. From the day when Paul was carried in a corn-ship from Malta to Puteoli, *commerce* and Christianity have been mutual helpers. Sometimes the trader has gone before the missionary, but wherever the missionary has settled and succeeded, he has by his very success given an impulse to commerce.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 273.

REFERENCES: xlvii. 9.—W. Guest, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 184. xlvii. 11.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 294. xlvii. 12.—J. G. Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 120, and vol. xxix., p. 168; J. P. Gledstone, *Ibid.*, vol. xix., p. 327. xlviii. 35.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Various Occasions*, p. 256.

DANIEL.

Chap. i., vers. 1-21.

I. We see here how national sins are ever followed by Divine retribution.

II. We see here most admirably illustrated the duty of adhering in all circumstances to that course of conduct which in our consciences we believe to be right.

III. We have in this history an illustration of the value of temperance in eating and drinking.

IV. We may see here how God's hand is in all His people's concerns.

W. M. Taylor, *Daniel the Beloved*, p. 1.

References: i. 1.—R. Payne-Smith, *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 378. i. 3.—iii. 16-27.—J. Wells, *Bible Children*, p. 173. i. 3-5.—Parker, *Ark of God*, p. 198. i. 3-8.—J. R. Bailey, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 235. i. 6.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 237. i. 6, 7.—*Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 229.

Chap. i., ver. 8.—"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank," etc.

Observe: I. The respect which honest and open minds, even worldly or heathen minds, cannot help entertaining for spiritual principle or power. Nebuchadnezzar was a man of imperial capacity. We know but little of him, either through sacred or profane history; but what we do know leads to the conviction that he was one of those rare men who are born for imperial rule. He was a man not unmindful of the duties of a ruler as well as the enjoyments; a man reverent too, and pious towards the only gods he had ever heard of, or, before he came across the greater spirit of Daniel, had a chance of knowing. It was something beyond the ordinary habit of an Eastern monarch to train captive youths to occupy places about his person and court. His distinguished consideration for the Hebrew captive children, shows that he was a seeker of wisdom, of guidance, could any man show it him. The one great secret of power, of living and lasting power, is godliness.

II. Daniel's way of getting and doing good was other and higher than the king's. Nebuchadnezzar had no higher notion of the way to foster the growth of mind and character than to feed it daintily. Daniel knew that mind and character had to be fed; he fed them on the bread of God. His resolution was one of the wisest ever taken by a young man in this world. The grounds on which it rested were: (1) ceremonial; (2) physical; (3) moral. Every man must study, as Daniel did, the relation of things indifferent in themselves to his own life. One man may adopt a mode of life, allow himself certain pleasures, trust himself in certain places, where another, honestly desirous to live soberly and godly, would not be safe for an hour. Let every man mark what is helpful, what is hurtful in the thousand indifferent things which he handles, and scenes which he frequents, day by day. And then let him build his bulwarks, and remember that the keeping of that is in most cases the keeping of the soul.

J. Baldwin Brown, *Aids to the Development of the Divine Life*, No. 12.

I. What were Daniel's temptations to abandon a life of abstinence from strong drink? (1) He was tempted by his youth. (2) He was tempted also by the usages of his social rank. (3) He was tempted by the courtesies of official station. (4) He was tempted by his professional prospects. (5) He was tempted by his absence from home and native land.

II. Observe what was the young nobleman's conduct in the trial. (1) He was true to his faith in abstinence from the use of wine. He had a principle of his own on the subject, and adhered to it. (2) He was true to the education of his childhood. (3) He was true also to the principle of temperance as a religious virtue. (4) He calmly trusted the consequences of his procedure to God.

III. What were the results of Daniel's fidelity in his own experience? (1) By his temperance he gained a healthy body. (2) In that brief trial of his youth he laid the foundation of a robust, religious manhood. In this early and brief fragment of his life, he settled the future of his professional career as a prophet of the living God.

A. Phelps, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 174.

References: i. 8.—G. T. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 70; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 147; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. v., p. 118; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 233. i.—J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 82.

Chap. ii., vers. 1-23.

I. The narrative sets before us the value of united prayer.

II. We have an illustration here of the power of gratitude.

III. We have an illustration of the devout humility of genuine piety.

IV. We have an illustration of faithful friendship. When Daniel was exalted, he did not forget his companions.

W. M. Taylor, *Daniel the Beloved*, p. 20.

References: ii. 1.—R. Payne-Smith, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 45; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 267.

Chap. ii., ver. 3.—"I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream."

We may feel that this ancient story is not wholly untrue, nor the effects of it wholly lost to it, when we cast our mind upon our own lives, and remember how much we, too, have been haunted by some magnificent dream. When the vision of what life really was, with its deep and solemn significance, was granted to us, we, awaking with the impression of all life's business, lost the vivid force of that dream—we could not recall it, and we turned to the seers about us to revive those impressoins which we felt must be for good. They are plentiful to seek, the wise and the unwise, the weak and the strong, the false and the true; and we, haunted by the remembrance of that vision of what life's deep significance is, turn in vain to these. And yet the conditions may teach us what are the real features and the real capacities of the true prophet. The story suggests that there are two great elements which are essential, in order that a man may be a real helper of his fellow-men, the true prophet of his age. These two were just those that were vouchsafed to Daniel.

I. The first is knowledge of human nature. The king says, "You profess to be able to interpret my dreams. How do I know that your interpretations are true? Tell me what the dream was, and I can verify your accuracy; vindicate your pretensions in a sphere where I can test them, and then I will be able to give you my faith in the sphere where I cannot test them. Show first that you understand me, and then I will believe that you can understand my destiny." Daniel tracks the movement of the man's mind, he shows himself master of the play of his thoughts. That splendid vision, that noble and colossal figure, represented what had passed through the king's mind not that night only but every night. It had been the

dream of his life, the splendour and the magnificence of his position; the glorious headship which he held over the empire, which he thought his own, from the high vantage-ground of which he looked down in proud contempt upon human kind. His thoughts were read. And whatever men have been in the position of prophets of their age, their strength and power has depended upon their capacity to read the minds and the play of thought of the men of their age.

II. The second condition is the knowledge of a Divine order. That splendid dream, and that magnificent figure which appeared in the king's dream, is the dream of man in all ages; it is the dream of self-realisation. But while this colossal figure is shown in its splendour, it is also shown in its weakness. This little stone, without hands, should demolish the whole; man's best and noblest dreams, man's most brilliant ambitions, are destined to be overthrown. And why? This stone represents precisely that unseen, that handless power which has not its origin in the conceptions of man, but in the nature of things. This little stone takes the place of this overthrown image; it grows; it is the empire of heart, the kingdom which cannot be shaken; and therefore there has never passed through human mind a dream, a noble and a true dream, that God does not see the way to realise. He breaks down our little efforts to realise it, that He may substitute His own. We look upon the things seen, and because the glittering image stands no more upon the plain of the world, we wring our hands and say, "The vision is dead, and there is no hope for humanity." But those laws which are the work of the spiritual kingdom, and of the moral kingdom, are building up that which we cannot see, but which we may know by the creation of its strength within the citadel of our hearts —that eternal kingdom of the living God which shall never be overthrown.

BISHOP BOYD CARPENTER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 8.

Chap. ii., vers. 29-49.

I TAKE the severance of the stone from the mountain to denote the coming of Christ into the world, and the collision of the stone with the image to mean the founding by the Lord of that spiritual kingdom which is in its principles antagonistic to all the world-powers, and which will ultimately subdue them all. Thus viewed, the vision which Daniel recovered and interpreted suggests to us many interesting things concerning the kingdom of Christ.

I. There is, first, its superhuman origin. The stone was "cut out of the mountain without hands."

II. There is the comparative feebleness of its beginning. The language of the vision indicates that the stone grew from a small size until it became a huge mountain.

III. There is, in the third place, the gradualness of its progress. The stone grew until it became a mountain. Not all at once was the development made. And so in the kingdom which it symbolises advancement was by degrees.

IV. There is, fourthly, its universal extent. The mountain "filled the whole earth." "The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth."

V. There is, fifthly, the perpetual duration of this kingdom. It shall never be destroyed, and "it shall not be left to other people."

W. M. TAYLOR, *Daniel the Beloved*, p. 39.

REFERENCES: ii. 31-35.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 306. ii. 31-45.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 324. ii. 31-47.—R. Payne-Smith, *Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 351.

Chap. ii., vers. 34, 35.—"Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image," etc.

I. WE see in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar the great fact that the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of truth, is at length to be supreme over all other kingdoms. Other kingdoms have always hitherto represented ideas and forces of evil. From the beginning, even down to the present moment, there has not yet been one kingdom which has aimed supremely at the well-being of the world. All of them, without exception, have been selfish and aggressive, aiming at the accession of territory and the augmentation of power and wealth. The image which Nebuchadnezzar saw did not fall of its own accord. It was not destroyed by a band of enemies. It was destroyed by miracle, by a stone cut out of the mountain without hands. We see in this a type of the fact that the *great power*—the power which is to be dominant in our world, which is to grow and move and smite all evil—is a miraculous, a heavenly power.

II. We note the apparent contrast between the agent which destroys evil and the evil which is to be destroyed. A stupendous image—that is the evil; a stone, quite small at first, cut out of the mountain without hands—that is the good. It has

ever been so. That which is to destroy evil is at first little and despised, and men laugh at it and treat it with mockery. What was Christ to all appearance that He should assume the part of the destroyer of evil? He was as a root out of a dry ground. He was an obscure man, from an obscure city, in an obscure portion of Palestine, without what the world would now deem education. This was the man who claimed to stand forth as the great, the only conqueror of error and sin and death; whose name was to fill, whose love was to inspire, and whose work was to save the world. If that mighty stone moves with a menacing aspect towards all embodiments of evil, it becomes each of us to inquire how we stand in relation to it. Like the wheels of Ezekiel, it is full of eyes. Wherever it sees goodness, faith, love, it leaves them standing. It breaks not the bruised reed. But for them that resist there can be no escape. There is nothing more fatal than the defiance of love.

E. MELLOR, *The Hem of Christ's Garment*, p. 219.

REFERENCES: ii. 35.—J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. ii., pp. 232, 244. ii. 41, 42.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 310.

Chap. ii., vers. 44, 45.—"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever," etc.

I. NOTICE the law of decay in human affairs. (1) It is impressively illustrated in the fact that individuals pass so soon out of the memory of the world. (2) It is more impressively illustrated in the fact that nations die. (3) It disappoints the most plausible plans and expectations of men.

II. To this law of decay in human affairs there is one grand and marvellous exception. God has a kingdom in this world, which lives. (1) It deserves mention in illustration of this exception, that the work of God in redemption is the only thing in human history that dates back to the beginning of time. (2) The contrast between the kingdoms of men and the kingdom of God is further seen in the mysterious vitality of right in this world, in its conflicts with wrong. (3) The contrast is further seen in an anomalous suspension of the law of decay in some cases of historic immortality. The only men who are destined to live while the world lives are those who are in some way especially identified with the kingdom of Christ. (4) The only names from the remote past which in the nature

of things can go down to the world's latest ages are those which are to be immortalised by the Christian Scriptures.

A. PHELPS, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 230.

Chap. ii., ver. 45 (with Prov. xxvii., ver. 1).—"Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure."

OUR subject is the future, and we are to find out what is known, and also what is unknown about it.

I. We owe a great deal, both in the way of stimulus and in the way of education, to the very mysteriousness of the future. It is expectancy—call it hope and fear—that gives life a rare interest: hope itself sometimes brings with it a sting of pain, and fear now and again brings with it even something of weird pleasure. Life that had no future would be but a flat surface, a stiff and cold monotony, a world without a firmament. But with a future it is a hope, an inspiration, a sweet and gracious promise.

II. We know the great broad features of the future, but next to nothing of its mere detail. Mortality, destiny, the future moral state of the world—but detail, *nothing!* Still, this ignorance of detail ought not to interfere with our right apprehension and proper use of the future. The fact of our ignorance of the future should have a deeply religious effect upon us: (1) dependence; (2) earnestness.

PARKER, *The Ark of God*, p. 222.

REFERENCES: ii. 46-49.—R. Payne-Smith, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 121. ii.—J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 85; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 184. iii. 1-12.—*Ibid.*, vol. iv., p. 243. iii. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1930; C. Kingsley, *The Good News of God*, p. 31.

Chap. iii., vers. 16-18.

I. WE can scarcely sufficiently admire the answer of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. There is an independence of speech in it which, when we consider the circumstances in which the speakers were placed, is only to be accounted for by supposing that their minds were thoroughly imbued with the thought that they were standing in a higher presence than that of Nebuchadnezzar. The chief nobleness of their answer was the

"*if not.*" This readiness to meet the consequences, this counting of the cost, elevates these Jewish youths and gives them a place amongst Christian martyrs. However useful they may be to us as examples of what faith will do in the way of quenching flames, they are still more useful as showing us what a sense of duty will do, even where a fiery furnace stares us in the face.

II. Godliness, having the promise of both worlds, the fear of God, and the keeping of His commandments, will generally bring happiness and prosperity and success; but "if not," still to fear God and keep His commandments is the whole duty of man. Take the case of the Apostles as a very striking example. Christ promised them that those who left all for His sake should receive, even in this present world, houses and lands and wives and children and the rest. He added, "with persecutions." Now the Apostles did leave all for Him, and what houses or lands did they receive? Men who were made, in the language of the Apostle, "the offscouring of all things." You may say Christ's promise failed; He promised and did not perform. Be it so. But if such an accusation be brought against Christ, it must be by His own servants, who knew His service, and not by others. Search the records then of apostolic experience, and confess it to be a marvellous truth that, throughout all the writings which have been left to us, there is not even the most distant hint of disappointment on the part of those who took upon themselves Christ's yoke; so that we must suppose, that however figurative the promise of houses and lands might have been, it was not a delusive promise. They received a spiritual wealth as His disciples which was worth more than all they had lost; their life was "hid with Christ in God;" they appeared to have lost all, whereas in fact all things were theirs. When their minds were enlightened by the Holy Spirit, they prepared to do their work and leave consequences and rewards in other hands.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 17.

I. LET us study the martyr-spirit as here revealed. (1) These men had attained to the condition in which conviction had passed beyond the reach of perturbation or question. The everlasting hills were not so firmly rooted as the belief in the God of heaven, and the essential blessedness of serving Him was rooted in these young hearts. They had so grasped the truth of the glorious power and steadfastness of the God of heaven, that it lifted them to a kindred firmness. (2) They

were themselves of that temper, and had come to that strength and unity of character, that they could declare, "There are things which we cannot say; there are things which we cannot do, whatever be the cost; it is blankly impossible; here stand we; we can do no other; God help us." (3) There must abide in all martyr-spirits an unwavering faith in the omnipotent hand of God. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us. His power to rule is clear to us as sunlight. He may choose to help us now, and signally deliver. He may choose to let us suffer, but nothing can shake our belief in His power to save."

II. We shall better understand the temper of these men when we compare it with a record which describes very faithfully the quality of much that goes by the name of the religious life (Gen. xxviii. 16-22). "Bless me, prosper my journey, bring me home again, and I will serve Thee," were the terms of Jacob's covenant at Bethel. How grandly beside these terms of bargain rings out the clear defiance of the text!

III. Let us look at the school in which men are trained to such Godlike vigour, courage, as this (Dan. i. 1-16). They began young and in little things to learn the lesson which it was God's will that they should practise in great things. Their life was fairly woven of one piece throughout. They were as resolute against little compliances as against great ones; ready ever to meet the tempter in the outworks, they were able to hold the citadel securely in the hour of the great assault.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 167.

THE great service rendered by these young Hebrew exiles to the world of subsequent ages is their teaching, by word and act, the nature and the working of a religion of principle.

I. They illustrate the truth that a religion of principle is founded on intelligent convictions of truth, so fixed in the heart as to be beyond the reach of argument.

II. The religion of principle consists pre-eminently in obedience to the sense of duty without regard to consequences.

III. The religion of principle carries with it a profound sense of a personal God.

IV. The religion of principle is the only type of religious character which commands the confidence of the world.

A. PHELPS, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 261.

REFERENCE: iii. 16-23.—R. Payne-Smith, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 105.

Chap. iii., ver. 17, 18.—"He will deliver us out of thy hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods."

Let us take three points in the history of these three young men.

I. Their resolution. They were entirely in the dark as to whether God would really come down, as it were, and interfere to save them from suffering or not, yet this made no difference in their resolution. They said, "God will deliver us; *but if not*—supposing He does *not* deliver us—we will not serve thy gods for all that." On the one side right, on the other enjoyment. Right shadowed with pain; enjoyment coloured with sin. Their answer was free and decisive, and we glory in it this day. And we ought not to leave out of sight something which makes this answer more remarkable still. Many a martyr has, in the words of a great martyr of old, stood firm, because the eye of faith enabled him to see clearly what was behind a flashing sword. He said, "Who would not labour to reach that brightness, to become the friend of God, and enter in a moment the joy of Christ?" We must remember that these Jews could not speak such a language, for these latter truths had not yet been revealed. If there was a deep conviction of the life to come, it was still a dim one—at any rate they said nothing of the kind to Nebuchadnezzar. They neither revealed any such hope, nor sustained themselves by it. All they said was that they had cast in their lot with their own God, and the cause of God; and should that cause be bound up with the utmost sacrifice of self, they would die in pain if need were. "We will not serve thy gods." If life is falsehood, let me not live. If the truth is death, then let me die somewhere in God's world; some day in God's time the great contradiction will be washed out.

II. Their endurance. To them all seemed as if the second alternative were coming, and that He would not deliver. As the flames leap out, as they are hurried forward by the mightiest men in the army, as the fierce heat is too much even for the executioners, they are, as it were, hurled forward with such a force, that there is no halting, and they fall bound, as into some burning crater.

III. Their deliverance. In a moment no more three men, bound, weltering in flames; four men, loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and the form of the fourth as of the Son of God. How nobly and beautifully was it imagined that the praises they then sang to Him were such as tradition

tells us—that men wrapped and bathed in the most powerful natural force; and finding it powerless upon them, called on all the creatures of God by them to "Bless the Lord, praise Him, and magnify Him for ever."

ARCHBISHOP BENSON, *Boy Life: Sundays in Wellington College*, p. 3.

Chap. iii., ver. 18.

WE ask ourselves what it was which gave these three men the power to withstand the will of this great monarch, this representative of the world and it greatness, to resist passively, but immovably, the overwhelming force of numbers, and stand firm, though they were alone in the midst of an assembled world. And the answer is obvious. It was simply that they felt the importance of the truth for which they witnessed.

I. Here then is the lesson the scene teaches us. It is the lesson that we have laid upon us the duty of witnessing to the truth; and that in order to be able to witness to the truth, we must have an inward perception of the value of the truth which is to be witnessed to. And as Christians have the office imposed upon them of witnessing to the truth, so they are placed in a world which tries that office severely, and opposes great temptations to, and brings an overwhelming influence to bear against, the performance of that duty. The scene which is described in the Book of Daniel is indeed a symbolical one. It presents to us in figure the vast assemblage of the powers and influences of this world as they array themselves in opposition to, and for the suppression of, the truth.

II. The office of witness of Divine truth, rejected as it is by the generality, as if it were something more than could be expected, of men, is a privilege as well as a duty, and brings, if it is faithfully executed, great rewards to those who execute it. The faith which witnesses to the truth has a sense of victory in it. It comes out best in the contest. It was so on the occasion we have been considering, and, as I have said, this scene is symbolical. The Gospel recompense for obedience is the manifestation of the Divine presence within us, the awaking of the soul to the knowledge of God, and to such a sense of the supreme value of His approbation, and comfort in Him as a witness and judge of our heart, as makes amends for any loss we may sustain.

J. B. MOZLEY, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 82.

REFERENCE: iii. 18.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, Part II., p. 251.

Chap. iii., vers. 24, 25.—"Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonied, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" etc.

THERE are two aspects of life: one, the common, the ordinary, the prosaic aspect; and the other, the Divine, the glorified, the Christian aspect; and that which alone can give you this second aspect of life is the presence of the Son of God.

I. It is a very remarkable thing that in this Book of the Prophet Daniel, the fourth and last of the four great prophets, we have such an extraordinary foretaste of the coming Gospel of Jesus Christ. We have here the expression—and it is the only place in the Old Testament—"The Son of God." It is impossible that the king can mean one of those persons who are called by a figure of speech "sons of God." He must mean *the* Son of God, the one who is made in God's image and God's likeness, who is of God and from God, and who stands in the exact relation to God that a child stands to his father. The form of the fourth is like the Son of God; and wheresoever that form comes, wheresoever that presence of the Son of God is felt, there the three become four; there the bound become loosened, and there those who are exposed to temptation or peril may walk in safety, because they have One with them who is none other than the God of gods and Lord of lords.

II. Such then is the glorification which is offered to every Christian for the trials of life. Life no doubt, for every one under the most advantageous circumstances, has its dull aspect. What we want is not to have those circumstances altered, but something which will make us proof against their dulness and monotony; something which will give us strength to cope with them; something which out of our weakness will make us strong; something which will shed the sunlight of eternal day over the darkness and gloominess of the morning spread upon the mountains, and will kindle for us by it a glorious day in which and through which we may walk from hour to hour with the presence of Him whose form is like that of the Son of God.

S. LEATHES, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 289.

REFERENCES: iii. 24, 25.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 42. iii. 24-30.—R. Payne-Smith, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 350.

Chap. iii., ver. 25.—"He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire," etc.

This narrative may be assumed to set forth in lively type or emblem the security of God's saints in the hour of their greatest peril, together with the reason of that security. Fire represents persecution, trial, torment, affliction, of whatever sort, under its fiercest aspect; for fire consumes, devours, destroys, causes to disappear. A furnace, heated one-seven times more than usual, is the very image of destruction in its wildest shape. To have fallen down bound into such a furnace, and straightway to be observed walking about there loose, is in like manner the liveliest picture possible of perfect security amid tremendous danger; while the presence of a companion, and He "one like the Son of God," explains the rest of the marvel, while it adds crowning interest to the mystery; for it accounts for that safety which before was simply inexplicable.

I. In every trial then, every affliction, which may at any time befall us, the victory is promised to faith; the same faith which on the plain of Dura "quenched the violence of fire." Faith in the presence of the unseen God will be for ever the secret of the strength of each afflicted one; and the language of every faithful heart will be to the end, "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

II. The fire of temptation is illustrated by the security of the three children in the furnace. The man is safe, because the Lord is with him, as He was with Joseph. And behold he walks loose, is freer than before, even because he hath been tried and hath overcome.

III. But chiefly are we taught by this beautiful incident to behold the safety of God's elect children in that tremendous day when the "Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire." That fire shall consume unquenchably the impenitent, obdurate sinner; but the saints of God will walk loose in the midst of that fire and have no hurt. The fetters of sin will be burned in that day, though the garments of mortality will go unscathed. Tied and bound with a chain till then, the redeemed of God will discover by a blessed experience that the marvellous property of the probationary fire is to loose from that cruel bondage.

J. W. Burgon, *Ninety-one Short Sermons*, No. 82.

References: iii. 25.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 662; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 345. iii. 27.—G. T. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii, p. 101.

Chap. iii.

I. We have here a specimen of religious intolerance.

II. We see here how religious intolerance is to be met. These three young men simply refused to do what Nebuchadnezzar commanded, or, in modern phrase, they met his injunctions with "passive resistance."

III. We have here an illustration of the support which Jesus gives to His followers when they are called to suffer for His sake.

IV. We see here that in the matter of religious intolerance, as well as in some other things, the opposite of wrong is not always right. Nebuchadnezzar had no more right to cut men in pieces for speaking evil of Jehovah than he had to put Shadrach and his companions into the flames for not worshipping his image.

W. M. Taylor, *Daniel the Beloved*, p. 58.

References: iii.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 338; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 517; J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 99; J. Foster, *Lectures*, 2nd series, p. 191. iv. 2, 3.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 21. iv. 13, 14.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 7. iv. 19-27.—*Ibid.*, vol. x., p. 27.

Chap. iv., ver. 26.—"The heavens do rule."

To say that "the heavens do rule" is the same as saying that Almighty God, as Eternal Love, reigns through all and over all. God and His obedient heavens make one sphere of power and overrule. God creates and governs, teaches and redeems, through the humanity of the heavens.

I. God's purposes are infinitely good, right, beautiful, and sure; and yet an open field is given for the display of creaturely will and opposition. All the frightful consequences of His children's freedom, all their vices, unrighteousness, cruelties, and miseries, are before His eyes, within His lap, and under His larger overrule. He allows His children to assert their freedom by originating self-willed motions and evils, but they and their evils are compassed about on all sides by the Eternal Spirit.

II. But in the meantime the Almighty and All-bearing Father has a most real cross, arising from the action of myriads of creaturely wills in opposition to the perfect goodness of His own overruling will. The cross of God comprehends all the inclinations, desires, efforts, and works in the universe which are contrary to His fatherly love and purpose. His love

willingly bears the cross, for He knows that by Himself bearing all evil He will at length be able to subdue all evil to Himself.

III. The whole mystery of evil and all its cross-working purposes being completely under the *overrule* of Infinite God and the heavens, there is no ground for despair, and no such thing as the finality of evil. Round about Love's throne shines the rainbow of promise, that all evil will be overcome by God. Evil will come to its limit, exhaust its energies, and expire in the bosom of Infinite Love.

IV. Under the reign of eternal law as it is in God and in His heavens, right humanity, with its right reason, its progress and happiness without end, are to come out of the lawlessness of self-will.

J. PULSFORD, *Our Deathless Hope*, p. 191.

REFERENCES: iv. 28-37.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 220. iv. 29, 30.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 247. iv. 31.—*Ibid.*, p. 246. iv. 33.—G. T. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 118. iv. 34, 35.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 949. iv. 37.—C. J. Vaughan, *Expository Sermons and Outlines on the Old Testament*, p. 288; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. viii., p. 209; J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, Part II., 262.

Chap. iv.

I. IN this chapter we have a solemn and instructive warning against pride and vain-glory.

II. A sad illustration of the proverb that pride goeth before a fall.

III. A beautiful illustration of fidelity in the proclamation of God's truth.

IV. A loud call to thank God for the continuance of our reason.

V. A reminder that the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Daniel the Beloved*, p. 77.

REFERENCES: iv.—R. Payne-Smith, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 171; J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 105. v. 1.—G. T. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 132. v. 1-4.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvii., p. 163.

Chap. v., vers. 1, 6, 25, 28-30.—"Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand," etc.

THE case of Belshazzar may be fairly assumed as a case of clear and powerful conviction of sin which did not result in the soul's salvation. There is a class of men who suffer for years

under hopeless and fruitless convictions of sin. There are certain truths which one who is living in the state of mind here described needs especially to consider:

I. One is, that the suffering which accompanies hopeless conviction of sin is no more than a sinner deserves.

II. One who suffers under unavailing convictions of sin should see that it is no proper effect of religion to produce such convictions. The legitimate tendency of piety in the soul is all benignant.

III. A third truth which should command the faith of one who endures ineffectual convictions of sin is, that God is a sinner's Friend.

IV. One who labours under fruitless convictions needs to see that the chief obstacle to his salvation is not the want of a more perfect understanding of the theory of conversion.

V. The chief obstacle to the termination of fruitless convictions in peace with God is to be found in some plain, practical affair of character and real life.

A. PHELPS, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 244.

Chap. v., vers. 1-31.

I. BELSHAZZAR'S feast was characterised by great intemperance.
II. It was characterised by great profanity.
III. This night was one of supernatural visitation.
IV. This was a night of terrible retribution.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Daniel the Beloved*, p. 98.

REFERENCES: v. 1-31.—W. M. Taylor, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 240. v. 5.—R. Payne-Smith, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 158. v. 10-23.—*Ibid.* p. 220.

Chap. v., ver. 16.—"And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts."

NOTE: I. The three principal sources and causes whence our doubts arise, and from which they get force to make their assault. They never come of truth or high discovery, but always of the want of it. (1) All the truths of religion are inherently dubitable. They are only what are called probable, never necessary truths, like the truths of geometry or of numbers. (2) We begin life as unknowing creatures that have everything to learn. We grope, and groping is doubt; we handle, we question, we guess, we experiment, beginning in darkness on towards intelligence. (3) It is a fact, disguise it as we can, or deny it as we may, that our faculty is itself in disorder. A

broken or bent telescope will not see anything rightly. So a mind wrenched from its true lines of action or straight perception, discoloured and smirched by evil, will not see truly, but will put a blurred, misshapen look on everything.

II. Consider how doubts may be dissolved or cleared away. (1) The doubters never can dissolve or extirpate their doubts by inquiry, search, investigation, or any kind of speculative endeavour. They must never go after the truth to merely find it, but to practise it, and live by it. There is no fit search after truth which does not first of all begin to live the truth it knows. (2) The true way of dissolving doubts is to begin at the beginning and do the first thing first. Say nothing of investigation till you have made sure of being grounded everlastingly and with a completely whole intent, in the principle of right-doing as a principle. A soul once won to integrity of thought and meaning will rapidly clear all tormenting questions and difficulties. He will be in the Gospel as an honest man, and will have it as a world of wonderfully grand, perpetually fresh discovery.

III. Note a few points of advice. (1) Be never afraid of doubt. (2) Be afraid of all sophistries and tricks and strifes of disingenuous argument. (3) Have it as a fixed principle also, that getting into any scornful way is fatal. (4) Never settle upon anything as true because it is safer to hold it than not. (5) Have it as a law never to put force on the mind, or try to make it believe; because it spoils the mind's integrity. (6) Never be in a hurry to believe, never try to conquer doubts against time.

H. Bushnell, *Sermons on Living Subjects*, p. 166.

References: **v. 17.**—J. Hiles Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 403. **v. 22, 23.**—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 149. v. 23.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 161. v. 24-31.—R. Payne-Smith, *Homiletic Quarterly* vol. xii., p. 33. v. 25.—F. W. Farrar, *In the Days of Thy Youth*, p. 325. v. 27.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 164; *Ibid., Sermons*, vol. v., No. 257. v. 30.—R. D. Bickersteth, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 65; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 56, and vol. vi., p. 244. v. 31.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvii., p. 233. v.—J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 113. vi. 1.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvii., p. 233. vi. 1-3.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 220. **vi. 1-10.**—W. M. Taylor, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 299.

Chap. vi., ver. 3.—"Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him."

I. This excellent spirit to which Daniel owed his preferment

was a spirit of self-control. He kept his body under. He held the mastery of his animal nature. He laid the iron hand upon his appetites and passions. He crucified the flesh. "He purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine that he drank."

II. This excellent spirit was a spirit of *genuine piety*. Much as we admire the temperance, the lofty courage, the sublime moral heroism of Daniel, we must go deeper than this to find the secret of his strength. He was, above all, a man of God. He endured, as seeing Him who is invisible. He had constant intercourse with heaven. To him God was a reality, a living and reliable Friend, to whom he could take every difficulty, and on whom he could trust in every danger. Yet all this tenacity to religious principle was united with a courtesy and urbanity that secured the admiration of all, and bespoke the true gentleman. He knew how to be firm and yet polite; conscientious, yet forbearing.

III. The excellent spirit to which Daniel owed his preferment was a spirit of unshaken faith in God. All through his troubles —and they were many and great—he never lost confidence in God, never failed to betake himself to Him in prayer. Beautiful as Daniel's character was, he felt himself a sinner before God. No penitent ever was more humble in his confessions than he. No saint ever expressed himself more clearly as altogether dependent on Divine and covenant mercy. Of all the prophets of the Old Testament none more distinctly predicted the coming of Jesus; none indicated more plainly the object of His coming as a substitute to atone for the guilty. All Daniel's hope for salvation was founded on the Messiah's work, who should "finish transgression and make an end of sins, and make reconciliation for iniquity and bring in everlasting righteousness."

J. Thain Davidson, *Forewarned—Forearmed*, p. 233.

References: vi. 3.—S. Macnaughton, *Real Religion and Real Life*, p. 292. vi. 4-10.—R. Payne-Smith, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 351. vi. 5.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 149.

Chap. vi., ver. 10.—"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."

I. Daniel knew that the writing was signed which threatened

him with death if he did his duty. It is well that we should all know it. There is no wisdom in telling even the youngest amongst us that his path will be a smooth one. It is a law that altereth not, which declares the contrary; a law more sure than any ordinance of Medes and Persians, for it rests on the unchanging qualities of human nature. As long as men are what they are, so long will they find it hard to be righteous, both from the fault of others and from their own.

II. "Daniel prayed and give thanks to his God as he did aforetime." It was not any unusual show of devotion; he did neither more nor less than he was used to do; three times in every day did he open his house towards Jerusalem and call upon God. The two things together are the secret of a holy life. Spiritual prayer, lest what we say be no better than the vain repetitions of the heathen; and frequent prayer, lest the spirit, being exercised too seldom, should leave us during the greater part of our lives the servants of sin.

III. It is the great art of the enemy of our souls to hinder us from thinking of God; to keep the question of obeying Him or not as much as possible out of our minds. Let us steadily bear in mind that the writing is signed against us; that if we will serve Christ we must be partakers of His suffering; we must take up our cross and follow Him. Yet, though we know this, not the less for this knowledge let us resolve to serve Him steadily; and that we may serve Him let us kneel down on our knees before Him, not once a day, much less once a week only, but often, but perpetually. And in the intervals of our work or our amusement let us link together, as it were, our more special and solemn devotions by a golden chain of heavenward thoughts and humble prayers; not trusting to our general good intentions but refreshing our continued decays and failings with as continued a recourse to the ever-open fountain of the grace of God. T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 175.

I. IT was no new thing for Daniel to pray; he did not do it out of bravado, he did not do it from ostentation; it was his habit thus to pray; he prayed "as he did aforetime." Those words give us the secret of his life. It was a consistent life. It was a life built throughout on the fear of God. It was a life every stone of which was a prayer. His worst enemies could find no fault in him, they acknowledged, except as touching the law of his God. They might taunt him for his religion; they might mock his faith; they could not deny the nobleness of his

character, his uncorrupt integrity, his sterling worth, the wisdom as well as the uprightness which marked his conduct. The purity of his life they could not assail; it was a consistent life, a life based and built upon the fear of God.

II. But if the secret of Daniel's success and courage was his consistency, what was the secret of his consistency? It was this: that he was a man of prayer. He kneeled three times a day in his chamber, and prayed and gave thanks to his God, as he did aforetime. (1) These words remind us beautifully and touchingly how, through all that long life, and though he had left Jerusalem only as a boy, the heart of the captive still turned towards the home of his fathers and the city of his God. (2) Notice how, anticipating by centuries the injunction of the Apostle—in everything by prayer and thanksgiving to make known our requests unto God—he who had just heard what he knew to be his own sentence of death, not only prayed, but *gave thanks* before his God as he did aforetime. There was no fear in that heart, there was no doubt of God's mercy, there was no questioning of God's providence, because he knew that the den of lions awaited him. He gave thanks now as he had done aforetime. (3) The man of prayer may not always be the successful man, judged by the world's rules, but he is the strong man, the calm man, the brave man, the man against whom his worst enemies can find nothing to accuse him, except it be as touching the law of his God.

J. J. S. PEROWNE, *Sermons*, p. 17.

WE are not told what went to make the "excellent spirit" (which was, in other words, Daniel's religion) which made him so illustrious in his day and generation. But though it is not declared, we have no difficulty in saying what were some of the features of that excellent spirit. (1) Part of the "excellent spirit" was a deep humility. The strength of every man is his humility. (2) In that "excellent spirit" there was very great sympathy for the feelings of those around him. (3) In that "excellent spirit" there was a very great amount of common-sense, because religion is common-sense, and the man who has been dealing most with the realities of the unseen world, will be the man growing most in those intelligences which connect themselves with the common things of life. The excellent spirit in Daniel was acknowledged, and all his enemies could bring against him was "he prayed too much." Consider the subject of private prayer.

I. All distinct acts of prayer are chiefly valuable as promoting the general habit of prayerfulness in the mind. There is a danger when we speak of the importance of prayer so many times a day of persons running away with the thought that that is enough. But to very little profit will be prayer three times a day in the closet, if it does not minister to an habitual uplifting of the heart in dependence and praise all the day long.

II. Though it is very desirable in our private communion with God, not to be mechanical, or tied down to certain laws too much,—yet some method is very valuable, even in private prayer. Every prayer ought to have these outlines;—invocation, confession of sin, praise, requests for future blessings temporal and spiritual, intercession.

III. Remember that all your greatness depends on your nearness to God. Always look to that first, for as with Daniel, so with you, the success of all the outer life will depend on that which is going on behind the scenes. A man depends on that which is going on alone between him and his God.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 90.

REFERENCES: vi. 10.—Bishop Walsham How, *Plain Words*, 2nd series, p. 262; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 815; vol. xx., No. 1154; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 213; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 422; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 279. vi. 11-14.—R. Payne-Smith, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 221. vi. 15-22.—*Ibid.*, vol. xiv., p. 272. vi. 16.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 248. vi. 20.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 44; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 282.

Chap. vi., vers. 21-23.—"Then said Daniel to the king, O king, live for ever. My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me," etc.

I. THIS story illustrates the fact that God often seems to crown the machinations of the wicked against the good with success.

II. The story illustrates the insidiousness of sin in drawing men into extremes of guilt which they never planned for.

III. The story illustrates the supremacy of duty over intrigue in the defence of the right.

IV. The story of Daniel illustrates the need which human governments often experience, of something like an atonement for the violation of law.

V. The story suggests that God's deliverance of the good is often by methods in which the marvellous borders upon the miraculous.

VI. The story illustrates, finally, the fact that the rescue

of the good often involves the destruction of the wicked, by a very subtle law which may be called the law of retributive reaction. The enemies of the prophet-statesman fell when he was restored.

A. PHELPS, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 277.

Chap. vi., ver. 22.—"My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me," etc.

I. NOTICE the workings of a strange conspiracy. An influential deputation asks the king to make a law to this effect: that no man shall, within thirty days, make a request to God or men, save of the king; that if he should do so he be cast into the den of lions.

II. Notice the object of the conspiracy—Daniel. They hated this man on account of his faith. Amidst the rabble of deities, gods, and goddesses, with all their splendour and all their circumstantial authority, in Babylon, he was true to his worship of the one living God; true to Jehovah and true to the covenant. Daniel was hated for his strange, holy, eccentric faith; he was hated for the life that sprang out of faith. They hated him also because he was a man of rare gifts; they sickened with envy at the sight of those rare gifts. He belonged by presidency to the Magi—not to the sacerdotal, but to the scientific, order. They hated him for his supremacy in office.

III. Notice the effect of this conspiracy. (1) The effect was first, to bring out Daniel's confession. (2) God sent His angel to stop the lions' mouths, and we may imagine their bland, caressing movements, as John Foster has it, round Daniel just as they used to be round Adam in Paradise. We are not placed in similar circumstances, but every one of us is tried sometimes to the fullest extent of our powers. You have lions of some kind to face; open your windows towards Calvary; open your windows towards the Great Sacrifice.

C. STANFORD, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 328; see also *Expository Sermons and Outlines on the Old Testament*, p. 297.

Chap. vi., ver. 23.—"So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God."

I. IT is good—and they who have proved it in their own persons will be the foremost to confirm the words—to have

had at times to bear witness alone and with none to sympathise, for the truth as God has taught them. It is only so that they can learn what is the strength of their faith; what it can bear; what it is worth. The faith that can bear to be alone with God in this world; *that* faith will pass unshaken through the gates of death, and meet God with no ignoble fear in the world to come. It is easy to believe, or think we believe, in a crowd. We feel, then, that the responsibility is divided; there is a sense of safety in the mere fact that many are trusting to the same hope as ourselves. But we may mistake trust in our clique for trust in our belief; and trust in our belief for trust in God. And it is good for such props to be at times rudely knocked away, if only that we may see whether we can stand alone; alone, as far as men are concerned; but not alone, "because the Father is with us."

II. It is not strange, therefore, that the Bible should be full of the histories of men who are distinguished by the quality of boldness. Abraham leaving his country and people to form a nation in a distant land; David going forth alone to meet the giant; Elijah before his enemy Ahab; the three children in the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar; Daniel in the wild beasts' den; to say nothing of the faithful rank and file of the earth; the "seven thousand" whose stories are not written in the chronicles of human penmen, but whose names are in the Book of Life; the seven thousand, the glorious minority, who in all times remain as God's witnesses, and will not bow the knee to Baal. It is not strange that characters like these should form the staple of the Scripture biography; for they are the men by whom the great fight has been fought and the victory won. The history of the cause of God in the world is, and must be, the history of brave men—of those who are not ashamed of Him, or afraid of their fellow-men.

III. Times change; standards of orthodoxy vary; forms of persecution have their day and cease to be; but two things remain the same, the will and nature of God, and the heart of mankind. Now, for ever in this world, the fight against the devil is to be waged by the brave. If our first needful prayer is "Lord, increase our faith," the next is "Lord, increase in us boldness," that we may not fear what men can do to us, nor what men can say of us.

IV. Though a brave man must needs be alone in the

world, it does not follow that he who chooses to walk alone is therefore brave. There is a solitude in which we may be, not alone with God, but alone with self—alone with pride and uncharity and a rebellious heart.

A. AINGER, *Sermons in the Temple Church*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: vi. 23—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 271. vi. 28.—J. Foster, *Lectures*, 2nd series, p. 174. vi.—J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 119; W. M. Taylor, *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 348; *Ibid.*, vol. iv., p. 55.

Chap. vii., vers. 1-28.

THE principles which underlie this prophecy are at once profoundly suggestive and exceedingly important.

I. Foremost among them we find the terribly significant truth that earthly power in and of itself degenerates into brutality. The appropriate symbol of a great empire is a wild beast.

Observe that the tendency of this brutality is to increase. The four beasts that Daniel saw came in this order; first the lion, then the bear, then the panther, then that composite, unnamed, almost unnamable animal, with "great iron teeth, devouring and breaking in pieces, and stamping the residue with the feet of it."

III. The great lesson suggested by the prophecy is that the restoration of man to humanity, must come, not from himself, but from above. He who introduced the healing salt which was to purify thoroughly the little fountain of our earthly life was sent forth from the "Ancient of Days." He came from heaven to earth, that he might elevate earth at length to heaven.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Daniel the Beloved*, p. 137.

I. FROM this passage we learn, first, that we must not expect to escape accusation in the world. No matter how carefully we order our lives, slander will have something to say against us.

II. We learn, that when we must either sin or suffer, we ought, without hesitation to prefer the suffering.

III. We learn, that no human power can keep us from prayer.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Daniel the Beloved*, p. 116.

REFERENCE: vii. 9.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 249.

Chap. vii., ver. 10.—"Thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him."

I. THE mere thought that there are in existence innumerable glorious immortal spirits; that their God is our God; that, let our condition in this world be ever so poor and degraded, yet these blessed angels disdain not to acknowledge themselves our fellow-servants; that they care for us and, as the Apostle says, minister for us as Christians and heirs of salvation; the mere thought of these plain Scriptural truths, may well arouse us from the lowborn cares and follies of this world, may make us "look up, and lift up our heads," lead us to consider what we are and what we are coming to. The glare of this world obscures our view of things spiritual. It is not without difficulty and considerable exertion that the mind can realise to itself things heavenly and unseen. It is only by spiritual aid, by light from above, that we can overcome this difficulty, and learn to live and walk (as the Apostle so energetically expresses it) "by faith, not by sight."

II. To be in the presence and favour of Almighty God, this and this only can constitute the happiness of all reasonable creatures, of angels in heaven or of men in earth. If we think to be admitted to that blessed society hereafter, it is necessary that here, in this evil world, our happiness should be like theirs in the contemplation of God's perfections, especially of His love, and in holding communion with Him—that high privilege to which we are entitled through the mediation of His Son, and the sanctification of His Spirit.

III. We are born into this world to live to eternity; but, as Christians, we have been new-born into Christ's Church, to an eternity of happiness and glory; we are entitled to call God our Father, and the Angels our brethren. It should be our great object and prayer to be made fit for the society of angels. It is of great consequence for all persons who really believe in the truth of Christ's Gospel, to withdraw their thoughts frequently from these temporary trifles, to raise them to high and heavenly realities; especially to the thought of that innumerable society of good angels, who, day and night, sing on high their Alleluias before the throne, and never rest. The more we cherish these happy thoughts, the more we shall, by the aid of God's blessed Spirit, become like those exalted inhabitants of heaven.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. i., p. 152.

Chap. vii., ver. 10.—"The judgment was set, and the books were opened."

THERE are three books, and three alone, which are to last for ever. One is with us on earth, and two are kept in heaven. There is the Bible here, and up above there is the book in which our sins are written, and there is the "Lamb's Book of Life." These are the books which shall be opened at the last day.

I. From a thousand passages in the Bible will God out of His open book set before us His law. His commands, His threatenings, His promises, will all stand forth to view, the same that you heard and read thousands of times from your very cradle. And here will lie the point: "You knew all this, My revealed law—have you kept it or have you broken it?"

II. In the second book, as in a faithful mirror, you will see the clear reflection of your whole life—not a line will be wanting. On one side there stands the long catalogue of all God's gifts and mercies to you, His providences, His calls, His warnings, His love. On the other side, as if darker by the contrast, is inscribed your life. Every wasted moment is there, and every thought—the secret things of the soul's deep places, are laid out as clear as the public acts; there is no difference between the chamber and the world. It will be an awful moment, when, in the presence of men and angels, the dark catalogue of all our sins shall be proclaimed.

III. In the Lamb's Book of Life stands the name of every heir of heaven. That book is always in the Redeemer's hand, and each moment He stands waiting with His everlasting pen, to record a name.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 6th series, p. 214.

REFERENCES: vii. 10.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 25; S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 170.

Chap. vii., vers. 13, 14.—"I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before Him," etc.

CHRIST the centre of Biblical thought.

I. Observe some of the details of Biblical truth in which the centring of revelation in Christ is seen. (1) The first token of it is the Old Testament doctrine of the Messiah. (2) The second is the New Testament doctrine of His sufferings and death. (3) The concentration of Biblical thought in the Person of Christ is intensified further by the Biblical doctrine of the

Deity of Christ. (4) It is seen in the Biblical doctrine of Christ's mediatorial reign. (5) It is indicated by the Biblical doctrine of the eternal union of our Lord with the redeemed in heaven.

II. Observe some of the practical bearings of this pre-eminence of Christ's Person and work upon Christian faith and character. (1) It has an obvious bearing upon the proportion and perspective of truth in a Christian's belief. Let this one truth become regnant in the soul and all other truths fall into rank around it, and turn inwards towards it, as metallic particles do when a magnet approaches them. (2) This centring of truth in the Person of Christ should furthermore impart to Christian experience a profound sense of the reality of God as a personal Friend. (3) Another effect of the pre-eminence of Christ in Christian faith should be to render the friends of Christ objects of personal and profound affection. (4) The chief object of a regenerated life should be the object for which Christ lived and died. (5) The ascendency of Christ in Christian faith gives character to a Christian's anticipations of heaven.

A. PHELPS, *The Old Testament a Living Book*, p. 314.

REFERENCES: vii. 13, 14.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 286. vii.—J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 124. viii. 1-27.—W. M. Taylor, *Daniel the Beloved*, p. 161. viii. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 886. viii.—J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 140. ix. 1-19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 154. ix. 1-27.—W. M. Taylor, *Daniel the Beloved*, p. 184. ix. 3-22.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 134. ix. 8.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 166. ix. 23.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 734. ix. 24.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxviii., No. 1681; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 364. ix. 26.—*Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 16. ix.—J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 152.

Chap. x., ver. 1.—"And the thing was true, but the time appointed was long."

THERE are very few things harder to bear, or more often handles of Satan, than those strangely protracted intervals which so frequently come in between prayers and their answers, between promises and their fulfilments, between good desires and their attainments, between the best-laid schemes and their reasonable success. The truth which I wish to press is this: that the space which intervenes in all these cases, and which seems to us so needless, so severe, is as much settled and predetermined by God as the prayer we offer, or the means we use,

or the event itself for which we are looking. The two are parts of the same thing; both are ordained, both are covenanted. The time is an appointed one—not loose—definite; and the one is as certain as the other. Consider one or two of the reasons of God's mysterious painful dealing about intervals.

I. God will always be a sovereign—not to be questioned, independent of man's opinions, infinitely beyond man's judgment, and always crossing the hands of man's expectations.

II. In heaven there is no time. It is impossible for us to conceive, much less to pronounce on, the action of one to whom all time is one perpetual now. In God's mind there is never any intermediate period. The prayer, the time after the prayer, the answer, when it comes, are all one—He sees them perfectly identified.

III. It is a rule of God's government, which you will find pervading every part of it, that everything is made matter of faith before it is made matter of enjoyment.

IV. The discipline is very good and necessary, for it addresses itself to two of our weakest points—our impatience and our pride. The man who wishes to have answers to prayer, must be a man who recognises that God is very kind and that he is very little—he must be a child content to tarry his Father's leisure—and the sooner, perhaps, that lesson is learnt the sooner will the Father give His child what He has been keeping from him just till he can say it.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, p. 174.

REFERENCES: x. 11.—G. T. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 170; W. M. Taylor, *Daniel the Beloved*, p. 251. x. 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1295.

Chap. x., vers. 18, 19.—"There came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak, for thou hast strengthened me."

WHO is this that in the presence of the angel is so weak and feeble that for a while he cannot bear even to hear him speak; that he faints and loses speech and sight before him? It is one than whom few nobler, few greater, or more courageous men have ever been. Daniel is a noble example of the good, great man. He had known what it was to be a captive and a prisoner, and a slave. He knew what it was to be a despot's counsellor and rule half the civilised world; and the one thing

which upheld him in his first estate, and guided him to the last, was his clear sense of his own position before God and man; a large wide view of his own being; a clear view of his Master's earthly claims on him, and overspreading and bounding all other things and thoughts, the fear of God, thorough independence of man, perfect dependence upon God.

I. A strong sense of responsibility is the true source of genuine independence of character. To feel and know what we are, where we are, that we have real duties, and are really answerable in the most minute particulars for doing them, and for our manner of doing them—this constant thought of insight is the mother of all real and lasting independence of character.

II. True independence in nothing differs more from vanity than that it has a sense of weakness, a sense of need, a craving of strength from above. Foolishness is strong in its own sight. The prophet with all his independence of character ruling provinces, standing before kings and reproving them, how did he behave when he was alone with God? Remember his softness and tenderness, his window opened towards his home, and the man in prayer upon his knees three times a day there. Or think of him, as when in my text God's message came home to him, and he says, "There remained no strength in me." It was because realities to him were real. Let us pray that we may not live as though the things of sight, touch, and taste were real, heaven and eternity shadows, but that we may feel that God and God's law alone are real, and that usages, however prevalent, however accepted, which are not after God's laws, will one day pass away and leave us, if we have trusted them, solitary, helpless, and broken.

ARCHBISHOP BENSON, *Boy Life: Sundays in Wellington College*, p. 219.

REFERENCES: x. 18, 19.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 14th series, p. 13; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 368. x. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1089. x.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. ii., p. 437; J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 162. x., xi.—W. M. Taylor, *Daniel the Beloved*, p. 203. xi. 31.—W. M. Statham, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 257. xi. 32.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 217. xi. 32, 33.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 609. xi. 36.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 40. xi.—J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 166.

Chap. xii.

WE have in this chapter:—

I. The hope of the suffering saint. "Many of them that

sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is here for the first time broadly asserted, and that in such a way as to connect it with retribution, and make it an encouragement to fidelity under trial.

II. We have here, secondly, the reward of the working saint. "They that are wise shall shine," etc. Among the nations of the earth decorations and honours are given to those who have done the greatest work of destruction. But in the kingdom of Christ it is far otherwise. The places of pre-eminence under Him are assigned to those who have been likest Him in the holiness of their characters, in the self-sacrifice of their lives, and in the hallowing and ennobling influence which they have shed around them.

III. We have here the rest of the waiting saint. "Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." Do not disquiet yourself about the future. Leave that in God's hands. You shall rest in Him during the remainder of your life on earth, and when that shall end, you shall rest with Him.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Daniel the Beloved*, p. 232.

REFERENCES: xii. 4.—A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 40; H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*; J. F. Stevenson, *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 307; H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. xxix., p. 291. xii. 9.—C. Wordsworth, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 262.

Chap. xii., ver. 13.—"But go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

THESE words contain undoubtedly the dismission of Daniel from his whole life-work, and may therefore be applied to anyone who has been working well for God, and has now gone to rest.

The text brings before our view:—

I. The majesty and greatness of the providence of God. God says not only to individuals—to each of His servants when he has done his work, "Go thou thy way," He says it to communities of men and witnesses for the truth. He says it to Churches. He says it to generations. He says it to worlds—to one world after another: "Go thou thy way." Everything is ruled and used for the accomplishment of His ultimate and perfect will.

II. How little is individual man! Is it not as if with some sublime consciousness of the greatness of His own providence —covering the world, stretching along time, reaching up to heaven, filling at length eternity and infinitude—that God says to Daniel in dismissing him: "But go thou thy way, I have got from thee all the little service I require"?

III. And yet God is mindful of man. He does visit the son of man, talks with him, dwells with him, works in him and works by him, for the accomplishment of His own great purposes. As for those who have loved and served Him, who have been happy in His kingdom, and valiant for His truth on the earth, they will be regarded with a Father's love and pity. He will deal gently with them. He will hide them beneath the shadow of His wings. He will keep them unto life eternal.

IV. For "thou shalt rest." To go from earthly labour for God is to go to heavenly rest. Even the earthly part rests in the grave where the weary are at rest. But the better part, sleeping in Jesus, is carried to Paradise, to the stillness of the blessed dead, to the waiting, yet happy and restful, company of sainted souls.

V. This rest at death is preparatory to something far more complete, "at the end of the days." "Thou shalt stand in thy lot." Thou shalt rest first, until the night is over, and then stand up in the morning as a man refreshed with sleep. The term "stand" expresses the completeness, and above all the permanence, of the new life.

A. RALEIGH, *From Dawn to the Perfect Day*, p. 401.

THESE words seem to say to us: The future is wrapped in clouds; much is hidden from your view, and there are many mysteries. "But go thou thy way;" do not hesitate; do not look back; do not measure by results; go thou thine own proper and appointed way. Do thy work, whatever it be, that God has given thee to do; fulfil thy part; execute thy mission; act out thy destiny. "Go thou thy way."

I. You must first have well ascertained that that way which you are now going to take is "thy way." This was the point at issue between Christ and Satan. Satan, falsely quoting, said, "In their hands they shall bear thee up," leaving out the sequel—which was the hinge of the promise—"in all thy ways." Christ saw the omission, and saw that any venture which was without that condition would be presumptuous,

and therefore He answered, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

II. I know of no comfort in life—I know of no repose greater than this—to-day, duty; to-morrow, trust; the foot straight in the road, and the eye, looking out for loving ends it cannot see. Therefore go. The clouds will vanish; the light will fall in; God will vindicate Himself; things may explain themselves, and the end will well compensate all thy effort, "Go thou thy way till the end be."

III. I do not wonder that the very next words are, "thou shalt rest." There is the soul's rest; increasing experience of God's faithfulness, a growing assurance of forgiveness; a greater and greater nearness to Christ; tokens for good; glances of the smile of God—all these will be "rest" even while you are on the road. Nevertheless, that "rest," sweet as it is, is always a future, running on and on; it is always "Thou shalt."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 10th series, p. 54.

I. THE first application from this text shall be this general one: that wisdom is a practical thing. The prophet is telling us what the wise *do*.

II. If you are wise, when you see souls going the wrong way, the very first thing you will aim to do will be to use the means for turning them. When we look at all the works done under the sun, and compare them with this, there is no work worth talking about but this work of God—the work of turning many to righteousness.

III. If you are wise, you will, in aiming to turn many to righteousness, begin with the young. A very little right, or a very little wrong at the beginning, must make a tremendous difference very often at the end.

IV. If you are wise you will perpetually go to Christ for grace, for God only gives through Christ. (1) The first qualification for this going is pardon. (2) Another qualification is grace. To teach you must touch; to magnetise you must be magnetic. (3) Beyond the qualification of grace there is the gift of teaching. Mere mechanical routine, mere human education, will not do. You want the gift of living in other lives, putting yourself in the position of other persons. You want the gift of the happy word and happy way. (4) Beyond all this, you want power from on high. There

are different kinds of power. Intelligence is power; union is power. But there are certain things in the lowest kingdoms of life that all the powers of all the teachers cannot do—they cannot make one primrose grow. And yet we want to do more than this—we want to turn many to righteousness. We must run to Christ, who says, "All power is given unto Me." Ask for that power; everything else is a cipher without it.

C. STANFORD, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1033.

REFERENCES: xii. 13.—A. Watson, *Sermons for Sundays, Festivals, and Fasts*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 409; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 151; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 292; J. Ker, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 263. xii.—J. G. Murphy, *The Book of Daniel*, p. 199; *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. i., pp. 217, 431.

HOSEA.

REFERENCES: i. 4, 6, 8-10.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. x., p. 422. i.—xiv.—A. B. Davidson, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ix., p. 241. ii. 1, 21, 22.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. x., p. 422. ii. 3.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 193. ii. 5-7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 590. ii. 6, 7.—*Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 303. ii. 8.—A. Mackennal, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 321. ii. 8, 9.—J. Keble, *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p. 110.

Chap. ii., ver. 14.

God's presence in loneliness—a sermon for Lent.

I. From the first dawning of conversion to the hour of death, it is in solitude mostly that God speaks to the soul. God's will, as Himself, is everywhere; within and without He speaks to our souls, if we would hear. Only the din of the world, or the tumult of our own hearts, deafens our inward ear to it. Stillness is as His very presence, for like the prayer for the prophet's servant, it opens our senses to perceive what was there to behold, only our eyes were holden. All God's works, because He made them, bear traces of His hand, and speak of Him to the soul which is alone with Him. All works of man directed or overruled by His providence—everything, good or bad, speaks of His presence or His absence. But chiefly, in the inmost soul He speaks, because there He dwells.

II. Once, we must be alone; and lonely, indeed, is that journey if He be not by us who first trod it for us, that in it we might fear no evil. Learn to be alone with God now. There shall He renew thy soul, hear thy prayer and answer it, shed hope around thee, kindle thy half-choked love, give thee some taste of His own boundless love; give thee the longing to pass out of all besides, out of thy decayed self; gathered upward unto Him, who came down hither to our misery to bear us up unto Himself, and make us one spirit with Him.

III. One thing only deafens us to the voice of God, untunes all, sets us out of harmony with all, that we should not, in all things, feel the thrill of His love, and behold there the earnest

of heaven,—sin. Labour, by His grace, to cleanse away this; pray Him to cleanse it with His precious blood; commend thyself morning by morning to Him, do thy daily work unto Him, and He will be with thee, as with Adam in the garden; and thy daily labour shall again be a dressing and keeping of the Paradise of God, where He shall walk with thee.

E. B. PUSEY, *Sermons for the Church's Seasons*, p. 196.

REFERENCES: ii. 14.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 306; W. Robertson, *Sunday Magazine*, 1881, p. 47; J. N. Norton, *Golden Truths*, p. 134.

Chap. ii., vers. 14, 15.—"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt."

OUR text belongs, we may suppose in a special sense to the Jew. It may in part have been accomplished in his past history, but its thorough fulfilment is to be looked for in the future. But there is every reason why the passage should admit of a secondary application—an application to ourselves as the subjects of the chastisements which God appoints or permits.

I. Notice, first, the expression "allure." There is no apparent keeping between the process and the result; the process—that of allurement; the result—that of a wilderness. Yet if we think for a moment we shall see, that we are often actually allured into the wilderness. For what are all those brilliant and fascinating hopes, which God suffers for a time to float before our vision, but so many allurements? And when these hopes vanish, as they frequently do, where are we left but in a wilderness—a wilderness into which the hopes had led us?

II. God speaks comfortably in the wilderness. If we force Him to make a wilderness in order that He may be heard, He does not make it that He may speak terror and despair to our souls. The object is, with the wicked, to draw off their attention from earth and its vanities; with the righteous to discipline them for an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory; and what, in both cases, is this but comfortable speaking?

III. The text is more than an assertion as to God's comforting His people under affliction; it declares that their afflictions may be made an occasion of advantage, or be converted into instruments of spiritual *good*. "I will give her her

vineyards from thence:" Christians gather their best grapes from the thorn. "And the valley of Achor for a door of hope:" Sorrows which are especially the chastisements of misdoing may issue in a firmer hope of everlasting salvation. God never breaks a man's heart except that He may be able to pour in, like the good Samaritan, the oil and the wine. He brings the sinner into the valley, the terrors of the law urge him forward and prevent all retreat. But just then it is—when the sinner feels himself utterly lost and at the same time confesses God's justice in destroying him—that the Almighty shows him, as it were, a cleft in the rock, into which he may run. The valley of Achor terminates in a door of hope; gladness comes back into the soul, the sense of pardon, the sense of reconciliation; he sings in the valley "as in the days of his youth, and as in the day when he came up out of the land of Egypt."

H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1843.

I. The text expresses the constancy and tenderness of the Divine love. (1) The relation between Jehovah and His people is spoken of in terms of the relation between husband and wife: "I will betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness." Blended with the Divine wrath against idolatry—yea, lying at the very root of that wrath—is the eternal love. God does not spurn Israel away, and bid her begone again to the lot which she has chosen; but, in the exercise of that affection which has survived all her shame, He says, "Behold, I will allure her . . . and speak comfortably unto her." (2) These words not only reveal constancy, they also breathe tenderness. To speak comfortably is, literally, to speak to the heart. Such speaking is not addressed to the ear only; nor does it merely inform the understanding; it reaches the affections; it thrills the soul; it awakens responsive echoes there. God has His unobtrusive yet mighty forces. Goodness, as well as evil, woos the soul.

II. The text points to the beneficent purpose of the Divine discipline and chastisement. (1) The wilderness is typical of the discipline to which God subjects His people. Through all trial there runs the same beneficent purpose. God designs to bring us into a true and safe prosperity; and so He seeks, by strengthening our character, to prepare us for entering into the land of "vineyards." (2) "The valley of Achor" may be taken as typical, more especially, of the Divine chastisements. The afflictions with which we are visited often

assume to our consciences the aspect of correction. This is because our calamities—bringing us more directly into the light of God—bring us also face to face with the sins which that light condemns. Only accept your trouble as the chastisement of One who loves you and there, in the valley of your humiliation, where the blackness of your sin is revealed to you, rise up against the traitor, lust, and stone it to death. Then "the valley of Achor" shall be made unto you also a "door of hope;" and with confident expectation, because with purified heart you will march on to fuller conquest and final victory.

T. CAMPBELL FINLAYSON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 251.

Chap. ii., ver. 15.—"I will give her . . . the valley of Achor for a door of hope."

THIS promise, like all God's promises, has its well-defined conditions. Achan has to be killed and put safe out of the way first, or no shining hope will stand out against the black walls of the defile. The tastes which knit us to the perishable world, the yearnings for Babylonish garments and wedges of gold, must be coerced and subdued. There is no natural tendency in the mere fact of sorrow and pain to make God's love more discernible, or to make our hope any firmer. All depends on how we use the trial; or, as I say: First stone Achan and then hope!

I. So the trouble which detaches us from earth gives us new hope. Vain regret, absorbed brooding over what is gone, a sorrow kept gaping long after it should have been healed, like a grave-mound off which desperate love has pulled turf and flowers in the vain attempt to clasp the cold hand below—in a word, the trouble that does not withdraw us from the present will never be a door of hope, but rather a grim gate for despair to come in at.

II. The trouble which knits us to God gives us new hope. That bright form which comes down the narrow valley is His messenger and herald—sent before His face. All the light of hope is the reflection on our hearts of the light of God. If our hope is to grow out of our sorrow, it must be because our sorrow drives us to God.

III. The trouble which we bear rightly with God's help gives new hope. If we have made our sorrow an occasion for learning by living experience somewhat more of His exquisitely varied and ever-ready power to aid and bless, then it will teach us

firmer confidence in these inexhaustible resources which we have thus once more proved. We build upon two things—God's unchangeableness, and His help already received; and upon these strong foundations we may wisely and safely rear a palace of hope, which shall never prove a castle in the air.

A. MACLAREN, *Weekday Evening Addresses*, p. 159.

REFERENCES: ii. 15.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 199; Bishop Lightfoot, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 266. ii. 19-20.—B. Baker, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 139. ii. 23.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 309. iii. 1.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 35. iii. 4, 5.—S. Leathes, *Good Words*, 1874, p. 226. iii. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 888. **iv. 6.**—C. J. Vaughan, *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, p. 56.

Chap. iv., ver. 17.—"Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone."

SPIRITUAL abandonment.

I. We are apt to be surprised at the proneness of the Israelites to the sin of idolatry. And yet it may be doubted whether *we* have not a great deal in common with idolaters. Let us see what the idolatry of the Israelites was. There was given unto them a religion; it came direct from God. Of their religious system it was the singular characteristic that the chief acts of devotion could only be performed at one place. To Mount Sion the tribes went up for all their solemn observances, three times a year. At other seasons they were scattered over the country, cut off from the possibility of united worship. This, doubtless, was the cause of their manifold idolatry. God had taught them a religious system—that system contained some practical difficulties; it seemed, indeed, to check devotion. The Jews sought to remedy this by self-invented plans; the issue was apostasy. In the history of the Church of Christ we find much that is analogous. It was a zeal for religion which prostrated Israel at the feet of idols; it is zeal without knowledge which makes men forsake the catholic faith for crude theories of their own.

II. And now as to the punishment. "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone." To forsake God is to forsake our own mercies. The judgment threatened in the text is one which would reduce us to the position of Satan himself. For what will follow from God letting a man alone? He will experience no further promptings and warnings, but be left unrestrained

by any secret reluctance to work all manner of evil. Memory and conscience have each a home in that lost spirit; but the whispers of the Holy One are never heard therein; and conscience has no voice to move to good, but wields only the fiery scourge for evil done or doing.

BISHOP WOODFORD, *Occasional Sermons*, vol. i., p. 32.

THESE are very solemn words, whichever way we take them; but the way in which they are generally understood is distinctly a misunderstanding. They are not intended as a threatening of the cessation of the Divine pleadings with an obstinate transgressor; there are no people about whom God says that they are so wedded to their sin that it is useless to try to do anything with them; and they are not a commandment to God's servants to fling up in despair, or in impatience, the effort to benefit obstinate and stiffnecked evildoers. The context distinctly shows us that this is not the meaning; and the Book in which they occur is one long pleading with this very Ephraim, just *because* he is "joined to idols."

I. Ephraim is another name for the northern kingdom of Israel; one of the two halves into which the nation was divided. Hosea was a prophet of the northern nation, and his whole activity was devoted precisely *not* to letting Ephraim (that is, his countrymen of Israel) alone. But it is the people of the other, the neighbouring, kingdom that are addressed; and what is meant by letting alone is plainly enough expressed for us in a previous verse: "Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, let not Judah offend." The sin of the northern kingdom in the calf-worship is held up as a warning to Judah, which is besought and commanded to keep clear of all complicity therewith, and to avoid entangling alliances with backsliding Israel. This, and this only, is the purpose of our text—a plea with Judah to stand apart from association with evildoers.

II. It is a very bad sign of a Christian man when his chosen companions are people that have no sympathy with him in his religion. Of course there are many things—such as differences of position, culture, and temperament—which cannot but modify the association of Christian people with one another; but still, if you are a Christian man, and the brother most unlike to you in all these particulars, there is a far deeper sympathy, or at least there ought to be, than there is between you and the irreligious man that is most like you in them all. In the measure in which we walk in this world, separate from it

because we are joined to Christ, in that measure will our faith be strong, and shall we be doing our Master's will.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, Sept. 16th, 1886.

REFERENCES: iv. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1140; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 201; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 24. v. 7.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 349. v. 13.—W. Aitken, *The Love of the Father*, p. 193.

Chap. v., ver. 13; vi., ver. 2.—"When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound."

So Ephraim and Judah went to the wrong person, and did not gain much by their application. The same fatal error is being perpetrated by multitudes amongst us still. The error is as ancient as Cain, and as modern as to-day.

I. It is pretty plain that Israel could not choose to be independent. They had not the forces at their control to enable them to defy all comers. Either the nation must lean on its God, or else it must lean on some arm of flesh, and king Jareb seemed as eligible a helper as anyone else. And neither can we be independent. Our nature is so constituted, and our conditions of existence are so ordered, that we must needs look beyond ourselves for solace and support amidst the strange and trying vicissitudes of life.

II. It would have been no true kindness on God's part if He had granted the Israelites prosperity when they were apostate from Him. This must have led them to feel the more satisfied with their apostasy, and the less disposed to repent. And it is no less His love to us that makes Him deal with us in a similar manner. He has to thwart us just that He may show us how little king Jareb can do for us.

III. When we draw near to God, we find a good Physician binding up our wounds. Listen to these wondrous words, and see foreshadowed in them all the glories of the Resurrection. "After two days will He revive us . . . and we shall live in His sight." The life hitherto cut off from us can once again flow into us; after two days in the sepulchre—two days of self-despair and sitting in darkness and the shadow of death—He revives us, and we begin to live in His sight.

W. HAY AITKEN, *Mission Pulpit*, No. 77.

Chap. v., ver. 15. "I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek My face; in their affliction they will seek Me early."

I. We often feel as if God were gone away from us. May it not be that there is just that difference—just that distinct boundary-line between absence and presence, "till they shall acknowledge their sin."

II. Consider how confession is to be made. (1) Confess to God. Let it be done with the deepest and most careful humiliation. (2) Let your confession to God particularize. Mention all the little things. Make them stand out in bold relief. It is the sum of confession. (3) When you confess sin, always do it as one who is accepting punishment. (4) At the same moment realize and do not doubt that you are laying your sin upon the true altar, the Lord Jesus Christ. (5) Try to embody that confession, and give it all the force and substance you can, by some holy act, some self-denying labour of love, some gift to God, some special act of devotion.

III. True confession to God will always be accompanied with, and will always produce, the wish to make some confession to man. To confess to man is generally a far harder thing than to confess to God—partly because it brings more immediate shame and loss, and partly because men are so much severer in their judgments than God. But, to a certain extent, it must be done. The confession to God will bring with it a grace which will enable us, and make it afterwards easier, to go and confess to man.

J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 6th series, p. 14.

References: v. 15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1483; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 208; J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, Part II., p. 289. v. 17.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 222.

Chap. vi., ver. 1.—"Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up."

I. These words declare that the motive of every Divine judgment, within the limits of this life, is mercy: the end of every affliction, however crushing, is the restoration of a sinner to the peace and the love of God. Within the limits of this life, I say. Thus far our vision stretches. We see but dimly what may lie beyond. Here at any rate the one constant, patient aim of God, by every means of influence which He wields, is to bring men unto Himself.

II. It is important for us to remember what some schools of Christian thought have strangely forgotten—that God's righteousness is not a righteousness which would be satisfied equally by the conversion or by the punishment of a sinner. God's righteousness, God's justice, God's holiness, yearn for the restoration of the sinner to righteousness, quite as much as His holiness and His mercy and His love.

III. There is absolutely nothing on earth irreparable while we can repent and turn unto the Lord, "for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up." There is absolutely nothing in the experience of the sinner, the sufferer, which God cannot transmute into joy. Turn to Him, and as in a healthy frame when wounded, the repairing power begins its work at once. No cloud can long remain on the life which He wills to vindicate. No calamity can long oppress the spirit which He wills to draw to the shield of His strength, and to rest on the bosom of His love.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 269.

REFERENCES: vi. 1, 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 400; vol. xxiv., No. 1396. vi. 1-10.—F. Hastings, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 261. vi. 2.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 132.

Chap. vi., ver. 3.—"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord."

THE infatuation of knowledge is the curse of life; the desire to know unsettles life. We honour the knower, the man who has eaten most of the sad fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Yet what is most of our knowledge? Think of a man in a churchyard, spelling out the inscriptions on the stones—a clever archæologist; you would not say this added much to his worth of attainment because he was able cleverly to decipher the inscriptions. Yet the world is a vast, wide churchyard, and what we call knowledge is much such a reading of inscriptions. This is not the knowledge that is power. Christian knowledge, true knowledge, *is* power. Now Christ promises knowledge. You are to estimate a measure yourself by what you know; you are to fall back upon first principles. But you are to follow on and follow after; and as you advance, the light, the gracious light, shall shine upon your way.

I. If religion is progression, it is surely, before it can be this, a beginning; but as a beginning it is a consciousness—consciousness which being translated is knowledge. This knowledge

is great because God is the substance of the soul. When God is the substance of the soul, and of all its knowledge, then the blessed life and the blessed knowledge give light within. The old superstitious theosophists used to say, that all things had their star, and each star had its angel above itself, and each angel its idea, or essence, or truth, in God. Is thy flower withered?—thou hast it in thy star. Is thy star darkened?—thou hast an angel. Is thy angel withdrawn?—thou hast God. See now what knowledge is; as we are said to see all things by the crystal sphere in the eye, so the spirit is the crystal in the eye of the soul; and as the soul has the Divine knowledge within it, so it perceives.

II. But it is a progression. Follow on. I can only conceive of the state of souls as a state of immortal consciousness, a state where hope and memory are as one, and love is only passive in certain and secure possession. "Then shall we know," but the quality of our knowledge will be the same as that which makes the holy life and joy and certainty of earth. We shall live then, not by the accumulation of facts but by consciousness, by feeling, and by thought.

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Dark Sayings on a Harp*, p. 223.

REFERENCES: vi. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1246. vi. 3, 4.—*Ibid.*, vol. xv., No. 852; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 75.

Chap. vi., ver. 3.—"His going forth is prepared as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain."

IT is Christ whom our faith must grasp under these two figures, the Day-dawn and the Rain.

I. The day-dawn and the rain represent some resemblances between the coming of Christ in His Gospel and in His Spirt. (1) They have the same manifest origin. The day-dawn comes from Heaven, and so also does the rain. They are not of man's ordering and making, but of God's. It is not less so with the Gospel and Spirit of Christ. The same God who makes morning to the world by the sun, gives the dawn of a new creation to the spirits of men through the Saviour. (2) They have the same mode of operation on the part of God. That mode of operation is soft and silent. The greatest powers of nature work most calmly and noiselessly. And like to these in their operations are the Gospel and Spirit of Christ. The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation. (3) They have the same form of approach to us—in perfect freeness

and fulness. The morning light comes unfettered by any condition, and so also descends the rain. And in this they are fit and blessed emblems of the way in which Christ approaches us, both with His Gospel and His Spirit. (4) They have the same object and end. It is the transformation of death into life, and the raising of that which lives into higher and fairer form. Here, too, they are emblems of the Gospel and Spirit of Christ. These, in like manner, have the same aim—life and revival. The Gospel of Christ is the word of life. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of life.

II. Notice some of the points of distinction between them. (1) Christ's approach to men has a general and yet a special aspect. The sun comes every morning with a broad, unbroken look, shining for all and singling out none. But the rain as it descends breaks into drops, and hangs with its globules on every blade. There is this twofold aspect in the coming of Christ. (2) Christ's coming is constant and yet variable. The sunrise is of all things the most sure and settled. But for the rain man knows no fixed rule. Christ visits men in His Gospel, steady and unchanging as the sun. But with the Holy Spirit it is otherwise: His coming may vary in time and place, like the wind which bloweth where it listeth, or the rain, whose arrival depends on causes we have not fathomed. (3) Christ's coming may be with gladness, and yet also with trouble. And as God's sun and cloud in the world around us are not at variance, neither are the gladness that lies in the light of His Gospel and the trouble that may come from the convictions of His Spirit. (4) Christ's coming in His Gospel and Spirit may be separate for a while, but they tend to a final and perfect union. The Gospel, without the Spirit, would be the sun shining on a waterless waste. The Spirit, without the Gospel, would be the rain falling in a starless night.

J. KER, *Sermons*, p. 82.

Chap. vi., ver. 4.—"O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away."

WE sometimes hear it taken for granted that there are men who live and die without any serious thoughts. It may be so. But of the far larger class it may assuredly be said that they have, from time to time, their painful misgivings, their agitating fears, their keen convictions; and that the fault is rather that these emotions are intermittent, transitory, evanescent—ever

and anon choked and smothered, or else scorched and withered, so that they bring no fruit to perfection.

I. There is first, the "goodness" of early childhood; found not quite unfrequently in the sanctuary of a Christian home, where God is known and loved and honoured, and everything that is attractive and glorious is connected with His name. There, in those earliest days, where open and defiling sin has not yet entered, the thought of God as Father, of Christ as a Saviour, of the Holy Spirit as a Comforter; the thought of heaven as the place where all is pure and loving and happy; the thought of sin as something deadly and hateful—thoughts such as these may be pressed upon the young heart with a freshness, and a fulness, and a beauty which the most advanced Christian warrior would give a thousand worlds to purchase. Happy are they who from such a life are early called to rest. How different their lot from that of those whom the present subject rather sets before us; those who fall from this earliest goodness; those on whom when the sun is up, he shines with a scorching and withering glare, so that their goodness is like the morning cloud or the early dew which are scattered by his rising.

II. There is a second growth of goodness, when he who has already lost much of the innocence of childhood begins to seek earnestly God's grace in boyhood. This kind of goodness is of a higher order than the former, in proportion as victory over sin is more glorious than freedom from temptation. Yet how often is it but as a morning cloud, dispersed by the first rising of the sun. Let us therefore fear. Fear—but not be cast down. There is One who giveth power to the weak, and to those who have no strength increaseth might.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 1.

Chap. vi., ver. 4.—"Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away."

THE theme thus brought before us is the frequently transitory character of religious impressions. We may classify the causes which tend to make religious impressions evanescent under three heads.

I. There are, first, those which are speculative in their nature. It has often occurred that when the conscience is awakened the soul takes refuge in the perplexing difficulties which revelation leaves unsolved, connected with such subjects as these—namely, the harmony of prayer with the foreknowledge

of God; the consistency of special grace with the free offer of salvation to every hearer of the Gospel; the origin of evil, the doctrine of the atonement, the doctrine of election, and the like: and because no satisfactory solution of these is found, the individual is content to be as he was before, and his half-formed resolutions vanish. Observe (1) that the existence of difficulties is inseparable from any revelation which is short of infinite. (2) These difficulties in revelation are of the very same sort, so far at least as they touch our conduct, as those which we meet in God's daily providence. (3) Difficulties in regard to things of which we are in doubt ought not to prevent us from performing duties that are perfectly plain.

II. A second class of causes which operate in the way of removing spiritual impressions may be styled the practical. There is (1) fear of opposition, (2) the influence of evil associates, (3) the fettering influence of some pernicious habit.

III. A third cause is connected with the conduct of professing Christians. The seriousness produced by some searching discourse is often wiped out by the thoughtless, flippant remarks of a so-called Christian on the way home from church. (1) To those who have felt their religious convictions shaken by this cause, I say: Religion is a personal thing; every man must give account of himself to God, and these inconsistent professors of religion shall be answerable for their hypocrisy at the bar of His judgment. But their inconsistency will not excuse you. (2) My second remark is to those who profess and call themselves Christians. See what stumbling-blocks your inconsistencies put in the way of sinners who may be seriously thinking of returning to God, and be warned to be watchful over your lives.

W. M. Taylor. *Limitations of Life*, p. 280.

References. vi. 4.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 138; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 140.

Chap. vii., ver. 2.—"They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness."

I. Look at the fact of God's remembrance of sin. (1) God remembers all kinds and degrees of sin; secret and open, wilful and negligent. (2) God remembers the sins of all men; the sins of the young and of the aged, of the well-known citizen and of the stranger. (3) God remembers the sins of all men accurately and completely. (4) God remembers continually and for ever. (5) God remembers with a practical result;

He remembers that He may act upon His recollections. He remembers as a Ruler, and He either forgives or He punishes.

II. Look at this fact as forgotten by those who ought to remember it. "They consider not in their hearts;" they do not think. Lack of thought often accounts for lack of religion.

III. Turn to God's complaint of this forgetfulness. God complains of the state of the heart. God complains of forgetfulness; and why? Because it sears the conscience, leads to false views of a man's position, is personally offensive to God, and is frequently the occasion of final ruin.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 4th series, No. 18.

Chap. vii., ver. 8.—"Ephraim is a cake not turned."

THERE is something in the character of some men which resembles a burnt loaf: a cake left too long with one side exposed to the fire till it has caught and been scorched, while the other side is still mere dough.

The character described is easily legible. It is that in which there is a too-much and a too-little. Every part of the mind and life—the principles, the affections, the temper, and the spirit; the motives and conduct, the feelings towards God and the feelings towards man—ought to be alike and equally influenced by the presence of the Holy Spirit within. The cake is imperfectly mixed, imperfectly leavened, or imperfectly baked if it be not so. It is the want of this unity, this coherence and consistency of parts, this combination and harmony of all elements in one whole, which makes the words true of any human character, "Ephraim is a cake not turned."

I. There is, first, the case which the context seems to point to; an inconsistency arising from too much of voluntary intermixture with the world.

II. Or again, there is the still sadder case, if it be possible, of one who is tied and bound by the chain of some evil habit.

III. How applicable is the description of the text to some characters to which we can scarcely deny the title of religious; some which, perhaps, most confidently arrogate that title to themselves. How often have we seen in such persons zeal without tenderness; energy without repose; eagerness for what they deem truths, without charity towards those whom they count in error.

IV. And if applicable thus far to Christian men, what shall we say of the bearing of the subject upon persons who have not yet taken a decisive step towards Christ's service. In

many of them conscience is at variance with practice, conviction with conduct. You will never be really happy until your life is at one. Unity is happiness, and unity is strength. If you see that the Lord is God, follow Him; follow Him whithersoever He goeth.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Lessons of Life and Godliness*, p. 65.

REFERENCES: vii. 8.—Spurgeon, *Morning, by Morning*, p. 175; J Baines, *Sermons*, p. 100.

Chap. vii., ver. 9.—"Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not."

GRAY hairs are a sign of decay. They are here the marks of age, the premonitory symptoms of dissolution; and so the truth the text announces is that men, many men, live in ignorance, and act in disregard, of signs that should warn and alarm them.

In illustration of this I remark—

I. It appears in the history of states. The words were first spoken of the kingdom of Israel. In the oppression of the poor and the sighing of the needy, in the corruption of morals and the decline of true religion the prophet saw the signs of his country's decay,—these were the gray hairs that were here and there upon them, and they knew not. Kingdoms, as well as men and women in decline, stricken with a mortal malady, have descended into the grave, blind to their dangers and their doom. (2) My text applies to the false security of sinners. Be our profession what it may, if we have habits if sin—these are the gray hairs that, unless grace convert and mercy pardon, foretell our doom. So long as you see one star in the sky, the sun is not risen; so long as one leak admits the water, the ship is not safe; so long as one sin reigns in a man's heart, and is practised in his life, Jesus is neither his Saviour nor his King. The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. (3) This appears in men's insensibility to the lapse and lessons of time. The nearer we draw to our end, through a natural callousness or otherwise, the less sensible we grow to the evils and approach of age. And when a man has not left his peace with God to seek in old age, his greatest work to a time when he is least fit to do it: in such a case it is a most blessed thing that old age does not make our hearts old, or benumb our feelings—that gray hairs are on us, and yet we know not. But where, in such a case, is the hope of those who have trusted to turning

religious when they grow old, and attending to the concerns of a better world when they have ceased to feel any interest in this?

T. GUTHRIE, *Speaking to the Heart*, p. 1.

How comes it that a man may slip away from earnestness in the Christian life, into a condition of spiritual decrepitude, without knowing it?

I. Because we are all inclined to look more favourably on ourselves than on others. The man who is himself declining in spiritual health may be, very often is, blind to his own defections, while yet he has a clear perception of the backsliding of others. How shall this evil be prevented? By trying ourselves fairly by the standard of God's Word, and by laying ourselves open in earnest supplication to the inspection of the Lord Himself.

II. This insensibility to spiritual deterioration may be largely owing to the gradual way in which backsliding steals upon a man. No one becomes very wicked all at once; and backsliding, as the term itself implies, is a thing not of sudden manifestation, but of gradual motion. We shall know where we are when we test ourselves by the Word of God, as that has been vindicated for us by the example and the spirit of the Lord Jesus. Let us not compare ourselves simply with that which we were yesterday, or last week, or last year; but let us rather take daily sights of the Sun of Righteousness, and shape our course accordingly.

III. This unconsciousness of backsliding may be largely accounted for in many cases by the fact that the individuals are absorbed in other matters to such an extent that the state of the heart is forgotten. Just in proportion as their business prosperity increases their spiritual health diminishes. Here, again, the question arises, How is this danger to be obviated? And the answer is, In one of two ways: either (1) by curtailing the business, or (2) by consecrating it as a whole to God.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Limitations of Life*, p. 327.

REFERENCES: vii. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 830; H. M. Arthur, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 282; Parker, *Pulpit Notes*, p. 73.

Chap. vii., ver. 14.—"They have not cried unto Me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds."

I. THE grand motive which should influence the sinner in turning

to God is love to the kind and gracious Father, who has so long borne with his waywardness; and a sincere desire to promote His glory.

II. A reliance on a deathbed repentance implies a doubt of the declarations of the Bible, that God expects us to walk before Him during the days of our earthly pilgrimage in holiness and righteousness.

III. It is a prominent feature in the great plan of redemption, that we should openly acknowledge our allegiance to God, by becoming a member of His Church. If all should look to a deathbed repentance, the very groundwork of the system of faith would be overturned.

IV. Besides faith and repentance, habitual obedience is required of every one who truly turns to God. Is a deathbed the place we should choose to root out sinful passions and desires, subdue habits indulged in for years, and form plans for amendment of life? If we ever intend to save our souls, we should set about it now.

J. N. NORTON, *Old Paths*, p. 172.

Chap. viii., ver. 2.—"Israel shall cry unto Me, My God, we know Thee."

I. THE prophet's language may justly be regarded as a distinct promise or prophecy on the part of God. He says, with that infinitude of meaning that all words truly spoken by Him must have: "To Me shall they cry, My God, we know Thee, Israel," or "Israel shall cry, My God, we know Thee." In the very midst of the national sins and disasters of His people, the Lord in His anger yet remembers mercy, and declares that the time shall come when idolatrous Israel shall confess to the knowledge of Him, in deed and in truth.

II. The conversion of Israel, we are taught, is contingent upon the bringing in of the Gentiles. To say, therefore, that Israel shall be restored, is to say that the world shall be converted; that the world shall cry, "My God, we know Thee;" that the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Nor must we judge of this matter from our own position in time; the wheels of His chariot seem to tarry, the Bridegroom is long in coming, but God has eternity to work in. He is not hampered by human circumstances, nor hurried for lack of time. If His purposes are real purposes, they concern the human race as a whole, and their accomplishment is coeval with the consummation of the race.

III. It is a remarkable transition here from the singular to the plural; from the "My God" to the "We know Thee." No scheme of religion would be complete that did not equally recognize the claims of the individual, and those of the multitude; none could be Divine that did not reconcile them. But the religion of the Bible says that "we" is made up of a whole nation, or rather of many nations, and yet every unit is a living entity, and instinct with life; for every individual cries "My God." Many of our practical problems of the present day consist in the difficulty of adjusting these rival claims. They can only be adjusted, they can only be eradicated and reconciled in the kingdom of God, when every unit of the great army that no man can number, can cry in deed, and in truth, "My God," and when they all alike can say, "We know Thee."

S. LEATHES, *Good Words*, 1874, p. 606.

REFERENCE: viii. 2.—J. H. Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit* vol. xxvii., p. 59.

Chap. viii., ver. 5.—"Thy, calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off."

I. CONSIDER the expression, "Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off." The clever policy by which Jeroboam was to escape a difficulty which he could and ought to have met in faith in the providence of God, not only failed, but ruined his house; and brought down God's heaviest judgments on an unhappy land. Hardly had his son taken his father's place when Baasha rose and hurled him from his throne, and with that thirst for blood, which to this day marks the Oriental spirit, slew every man, woman, and child, belonging to the royal family. And amid the silence that reigned over this scene of ruthless massacre, the voice of Providence was heard, saying, "Thy calf, O Jeroboam, hath cast thee off." What the calf did to the monarch, it did to the people—here called Samaria—"who, following the steps of their king apostatized from God, and turned their backs on His temple. Judgment succeeded judgment. The ten tribes, a broken bleeding band, left the land of Israel to go into banishment—to be lost for ages or for ever; and over the two idols that were left behind without a solitary worshipper at their shrine, God in providence might be heard saying, "Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off."

II. By way of warning and instruction I observe that the sentiments and spirit of my text are illustrated: (1) By the case of those who put riches in the place of God; (2) by those who live for fame—for the favour, not of God, but of men;

(3) by those who seek their happiness in the pleasures of sin.

T. GUTHRIE, *Family Treasury*, Sept. 1861, p. 129 (see also *The Way to Life*, p. 20).

REFERENCES: viii. 7.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 312. viii. 12.—*Ibid., Sermons*, vol. i., No. 15; J. Hiles Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 133; J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 353.

Chap. viii., ver. 14.—"Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof."

I. CONSIDER the statements of the text in their primary reference to Israel and Judah, showing their application in spirit to ourselves. (1) Those whom God originally called to be one, whom He consolidated into a Church, making them His family and people, are now two; they are split and divided into contending factions. (2) Notice the different conduct by which the two parties in the text were distinguished. Israel builds temples. Judah multiplies fenced cities. Israel fell from and corrupted the primitive institutions of Divine worship. Judah put her trust, not in what God had promised to do for her, but in herself. The people had the form of godliness without the power. While they approached God with their lips, their hearts were far from Him; they bowed in His temple, but they trusted in themselves. (3) The conduct of Israel and Judah, though so different, was alike bad; in each case it proceeded from the same sinful source; against both the judgments of God were equally denounced.

II. Notice a few practical lessons from the subject. (1) Religion is the most powerful thing in the world. (2) This power, the strongest in itself over the human mind, is exposed by the heart to the greatest perversion, and that in various and opposite directions. (3) The liability of religion to corruption, and the power and tendency of men to corrupt it, are no presumption against the reality of religion in general, or against the truth of Christianity in particular. (4) While large masses of the professing Church may seem to be characterized by particular and obvious forms of error, we should always remember that many individuals in each mass may not be involved in the surrounding corruption. (5) It is highly important for us to consider what may be the tendency of any Church system with

which we are connected, and to examine narrowly into our own spirit or temper.

T. BINNEY, *Sermons in King's Weighhouse Chapel*, 2nd series p. 267.

REFERENCES: x. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 276; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 315; *Ibid.*, p. 311 x. 12.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1261; vol. xxvi., No. 1563; *Ibid.* *Evening by Evening*, p. 92; E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, 2nd series, p. 281. xi. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons* vol. xxviii., No. 1675. xi. 3.—*Ibid.*, vol. xvii., No. 1021.

Chap. xi., ver. 4.—"I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love."

THIS is not a day* for difficult doctrines, but for the simplest and humblest feelings. The appeal is not made to our understanding nor even directly to our conscience. With the cords of a man we are drawn. The human affections in which all men share, the feelings which even the poorest, the meanest, the most ignorant partake in; the pity, the tenderness, the love that can only be called forth by love—these are now the cords by which our Father draws us, the cords of a man.

I. We are sometimes cold and dead. There are times when our feelings towards God seem to lose their warmth. We can obey and we do, but we feel like servants, not like children, and we are unhappy because we cannot rouse any warmer feelings in ourselves. When this is so, where can we go but to the Cross of Christ? Can our hearts long resist the pleading of that story, or can we refuse to come when the Father begins to draw us with the cords of a man, with bands of love.

II. Perhaps under a decent exterior we hide some sinful habit which has long been eating into our souls. Our besetting sin has clung to us, and we cannot get rid of it. If this be so, yet once more let us turn to God, and gaze upon the Cross of Christ. Let us think of that sorrow which was beyond all other sorrows, and that love which caused all the sorrow. Let us look on this till our thoughts are filled with the sight, till our hearts answer to the affection which could thus suffer, till we feel the cords draw us, the cords of a man, and we sit at the foot of the Cross and never wish to leave it.

III. Or perhaps we have never really striven to serve God at all. We have lived as best suited the society in which we were, as most conduced to our own pleasure. Whenever the thought

* Preached on Good Friday.

of God or conscience comes across us, we immediately find that but a dull subject to think on, and we turn to pleasanter and more exciting themes. What then shall warm our hearts but this plain story of sadness? Here shall all men find the medicine to heal their sore disease. Proud thoughts, self-conscious contentment, cannot stand here. We come as sheep that have gone astray. We hasten to the Shepherd whose voice we hear calling us from afar. He hath sought us long. We think not of the pastures, but of Him; to lie in His bosom, to be carried in His arms, to hear His words of comfort once more, to see His face, to feel that we are pressed to His heart.

BISHOP TEMPLE, *Rugby Sermons*, 1st series, p. 1.

CONSIDER the place of love in the Gospel.

I. The Gospel is a revelation of love. Herein lies its power, the secret of its strength. It reveals the love of God. It tells how He, in whose Divine holiness there beats not, as in the best of us) one pulse of sympathy with evil, yet loves with an unqualified love all the souls which He has made. In the immense, immeasurable love of God there is room for all His creatures. He loves, and therefore He pleads. He loved first, and therefore He gave His Son to be the life of the fallen.

II. In addition to the revelation of love, there is, in the Gospel, an invitation of love. There is something always pathetic to the unsophisticated ear in the petition of love. Hearts athirst, hearts dried up, just for lack of love, sometimes see in the far distance, something, some one, whom they feel they could have lived and died for. Pitiable, most pitiable, when we think of it, is the wilderness of the unloved. And yet there was a love for them, would they but have had it; a love better than of son or daughter, better than of wife or husband; a love indestructible, satisfying, eternal. The place of love in the Gospel is first a revelation, and then, a permission and an invitation. (3) In the Gospel there is a communication or transmission of love. He who has been loved, and therefore loves, is bidden, by the love of God to love his brother also. And then, in that transmission, that tradition, that handing on of the love, the whole of the Gospel, its precept as its comfort —is in deed and in truth perfected. Little indeed do they know of the power of the Gospel, who think either that obedience will replace the love of God, or duty be a substitute for the love of man. Christ teaches us that both towards God and towards man love goes first and duty follows after.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Last Words at Doncaster*, p. 87.

THE words of the text suggest: (1) The humaneness of God's discipline; (2) the importance of human relations as well as Divine.

I. The humaneness of God's rule is seen (1) in the way in which God conceals His laws under the forms and influences of human society. Dependence—we learned the lesson when we hung upon our mother's breast; obedience—we were broken into it by all the varied discipline of our early home; reverence—our souls learned reverence by the perception of sanctity of character in some one whom we had before learned to love; authority—we felt its constraint in human excellence before we knew the source of all authority to be in God. (2) God makes use of human influences to draw us to Himself. Among such influences are the necessary restrictions of society. (3) The sense of responsibility is another influence by which God draws men to Himself. The pressure of responsibility has made many pray who never prayed before; the human obligation has been a cord to draw to God.

II. Consider the sanctity of human relations and the way to use them. They are the temple of the living God, the channels of His grace; sacred as the form that enshrines an eternal power. To be true to all human relations is not to be godly; but God intends this to be the way to godliness. There is not a human affection that will not gain in beauty, a human obligation that will not increase in sanctity, a human life that will not bloom anew, when the End and Author of its grace and being is recognized and adored in God.

A. MACKENNAL, *Sermons from a Sick Room*, p. 49.

REFERENCES: xi. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 934; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 141. xi. 8.—J. Baldwin Brown, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 261. xii. 4.—E. Paxton Hood, *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. iii., p. 346. xii. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 206. xii. 12.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 327. xiii. 1.—J. A. Macfadyen, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 268. xiii. 1, 2.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 103. xiii. 2.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 185. xiii. 5.—*Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 307. xiii. 5-8.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1441.

Chap. xiii., ver. 9.—"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help."

I. SELF-DESTRUCTION is possible to us men—even the destruction of the highest, noblest, and divinest part of our nature.

II. The only power by which we can destroy ourselves is the power of sinning.

III. Every finally destroyed man is self-destroyed.

IV. The self-destroyer who is in this perilous position may be saved from self-destruction. (1) A man cannot save himself. (2) No fellow-man can save the sinner. God can save the self-destroyer, but God alone. (3) Think of the encouragement to return. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should return unto Me and live."

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 4th series, No. 11.

REFERENCES: xiii. 9.—W. Jay, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 61. xiii. 10.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 321.

Chap. xiii., ver. 11.—"I gave thee a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My wrath."

THE Israelites seem to have asked for a king from an unthankful caprice and waywardness. To punish them, God gave them a king after their own heart, Saul, the son of Kish, a Benjamite; of whom the text speaks in these terms: "I gave them a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My wrath."

I. Saul, the king whom God gave them, had much to recommend him to minds greedy of the dust of the earth. He was brave, daring, resolute; gifted, too, with strength of body as well as of mind—a circumstance which seems to have attracted their admiration. Both his virtues and his faults were such as became an Eastern monarch, and were adapted to secure the fear and submission of his subjects. Pride, haughtiness, obstinacy, reserve, jealousy, caprice,—these, in their way, were not unbecoming qualities in the king after whom their imaginations roved. On the other hand, the better parts of his character were of an excellence sufficient to engage the affection of Samuel himself.

II. Why was Saul marked for vengeance from the beginning? Is his character so essentially faulty that it must be thus distinguished for reprobation above all the anointed kings after him? This question leads us to a deeper inspection of his character. Now we know the first duty of every man is the fear of God—a reverence for His Word, a love of Him, and a desire to obey Him; and besides, it was peculiarly incumbent on the king of Israel, as God's vicegerent, by virtue of his office, to promote

His glory whom his subjects had rejected. Now Saul lacked this one thing It would appear that he was never under the abiding influence of religion—or, in Scripture language, the fear of God—however he might be at times moved and softened. Mere natural virtue wears away, when men neglect to deepen it into religious principle. Saul appears in his youth to be unassuming and forbearing; in advanced life he is not only proud and gloomy (as he ever was in a degree), but cruel, resentful, and hardhearted, which he was not in his youth. He began by consulting Samuel as a diviner; this showed the direction of his mind. It steadily persevered in its evil way—and he ends by consulting a professed sorceress at Endor. Unbelief and wilfulness are the wretched characteristics of Saul's history—an ear deaf to the plainest commands, a heart hardened against the most gracious influences.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 29.

Chap. xiii., ver. 14.—"O grave, I will be thy destruction."

I. THERE are other graves worse than the graves which lie in the churchyard. The grave of which Hosea and Isaiah speak is partly the grave of Israel's fallen state, and partly the consequence of that fallen state—their captivity at Babylon. Of every grave, physical and moral, Christ is the destruction. His own grave was a grave annihilated, simply because He was in it.

II. There are Kibroth-hattaavahs, "graves of lust." Do you wish to escape from that lust? Have you been wrestling to get out, and you cannot? It is a resurrection, it requires the supernatural agency of a resurrection. There is only one can do it, and that one is Christ. Use that Conqueror's hand; take Christ into your heart, and realize Him there. He will break through that iron-bound gate of the moral death in which you lie, and He will say to that evil which is enthralling you, "Oh grave, I will be thy destruction."

III. There is another state—a soul which has once tasted life, life from God. But now it is gone. The spiritual life is fled, it is in the dust, it cannot lift itself up again. Who will roll away the stone? What shall we do? Believe in the resurrection. The heart that has Christ in it cannot be a sepulchre long. He will make the way through as surely as He did in the sepulchre at the garden.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 9th series, p. 69.

REFERENCE: xiii. 14.—H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1994.

Chap. xiv., ver. 1.—"O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity."

WHILE the freeness of God's mercy is the leading idea suggested by these words, it is not the only one; on the contrary, the condition of our nature is accurately expressed, as is the mode by which alone it can be ameliorated.

I. Consider, first, the state into which man has brought himself. There are few things more important, whether we view mankind collectively or individually, than the fastening on the sinner all the blame of his sin. God may invite the prodigal to return, but God has nothing to do with his wandering away into the desert. Thou hast not fallen through an inherent inability to stand; He has so constituted thee that thou mightest have stood. Thou hast not fallen through the ground being slippery, and thick-set with snares; He placed thee where thy footing was firm, and thy pathway direct. Upon man himself come home wholly all the effects of the fall. In whatever degree there may be a necessity of sinning, in no degree is there a necessity of perishing. God places no man in such a moral condition that his falling into perdition is unavoidable. Let a man have once heard of Christ, and from that moment forward salvation is within arm's length of this man. Is he willing to be saved? Then he may be saved. Is he unwilling? Then, at least, he perishes by his own choice; and our righteous, and merciful, and redeeming God is clear in judgment when He leaves the obdurate one to the fruit of his own folly.

II. Observe the mode of deliverance, as it may be gathered from the invitation: "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God." (1) The fall did not do away with God's claim on man. Man could not cease to belong to God as a creature, when man had given himself to Satan; and this important fact is assumed, if not asserted, in the words of our text. The party addressed is the *fallen*, but the party addressing is still the Lord *his* God. Disobedience has removed man from the centre to the outskirts of the universe, but in one great sense it could not remove him from God, "who is that infinite sphere," as expressed by an old writer, "whose centre is everywhere, and circumference nowhere." (2) We gather an inference of consolation from the fact that thou, "Israel, hast fallen by thine iniquity." There is the groundwork of hope, that God will yet look mercifully upon us and restore us, seeing that, notwithstanding our alienation, He is still our God. The

message, "Return unto the Lord thy God," is full of consolation, because it invites us to the Being from whom all our rebellion has not been able to divide us. (3) That which God invites us to do must be possible for us to do. If God calls on us to return we are not at liberty to question that there lies no impossibility against our returning. Now this assumes two things: (i) that God has removed all existing obstacles: (ii) that He bestows all requisite assistance in the performance of it.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2143.

Chap. xiv., vers. 1, 2.

How to return to God.

I. The first act of the awakened soul is usually an act of prayer, and it is most natural, and indeed most proper, that it should be so. The very act of expressing our need has a tendency both to bring about clearer views of what it is that we need, and to intensify our desire. Inward silence and reserve tend to benumb the faculties and to check the rising desires of the soul, when the outpouring of earnest supplication seems to stir us to our inmost depths.

II. Notice the urgency of this utterance, which God's love puts as it were in our mouths. There is only one kind of prayer that is at all appropriate in the lips of an awakened sinner, who finds himself without God in the world, but who desires to arise and go to His Father: and that is the urgent, specific entreaty for present forgiveness and salvation.

III. The divinely suggested utterance of our text is not only an urgent prayer, but it is also the expression of a distinct change in our moral attitude towards God. It marks the end of the life of aversion from God, and the beginning of a true conversion to God. "Take with you words" says the voice of Heavenly Love, "and turn unto the Lord." Let there be a distinct reversal of your former attitude of independence and alienation.

IV. When thus with all our hearts we truly seek Him, it will not be long before we become aware of something that seems at first to rise like a barrier between Him and us, shutting us off from all contact with Him. What about our sins? This experience is evidently foreseen in our text, where we have a most definite and specific request for an immediate and most necessary benefit. There stands the barrier, and nothing can be done until it is removed; and so the Father's love bids us pray, "Take away all iniquity."

When this fatal barrier is removed, then is the way clear and open to the Father's house; and may we not say into the Father's arms? "Receive us graciously." We need not fear going home to God. Their are no taunts on His lips, no frown on His brow; only infinite tenderness in His heart. He is too great to be otherwise than gracious; He has done too much to open up the new and living way not to be ready to welcome us home when at length we do come.

W. HAY AITKEN, *The Mission Pulpit*, No. 72.

REFERENCES: xiv. 1, 2.—W. Aitken, *The Love of the Father*, p. 113. xiv. 1-3.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 162.

Chap. xiv., ver. 2.—"Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips."

THERE is a porch even within the sanctuary of repentance. There is a pause of preparation, words selected, distinct movement, accurate speaking, an order in prayer, a new relation to God recognized, an audience asked, reception given,—leading up to self-dedication.

I. Words are immense helps to thoughts. You will never think accurately, nor think continuously, nor think without wandering, without words. Therefore, never be indifferent to the language in which you clothe your religion. "Take with you words."

II. When the words are ready, "turn." Adjust the attitude of your mind. It only wants a real "turn." The back where the face was, and the face where the back was; looking the other way,—away from the world, away from the past, straight into the love of Christ.

III. Words are sacrifice. It is a pleasant and a holy thought that we all of us carry about with us wherever we go the means of sacrifice to God. We should offer all we have. Our lips should make sacrifice. Sacrifice, in its high propitiatory sense we cannot, and we need not, offer sacerdotally. There is no sacrifice in any Christian worship. We only plead one sacrifice, made once and for ever for the sins of the whole world. But spiritually every one of us is a priest. And there is not a believer who has not a sacrifice to offer: himself, his heart, his life, his soul, his body, his lips.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 10th series, p. 173.

REFERENCES: xiv. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1695. xiv. 4.—*Ibid.*, vol. ix., No. 501, vol. xvi., No. 920; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 296. xiv. 4-8.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 203.

Chap. xiv., ver. 5.—"I will be as the dew unto Israel."

THIS is a gracious promise to a penitent and returning people. Israel had fallen by her iniquity; but "He who pardoneth iniquity, transgression, and sin" had earnestly exhorted her to arise and return by repentance and righteousness to Himself; to take with her words of humble confession, of earnest entreaty, of renewed covenant engagement, of grateful, loving trust, and of solemn vow and promise for the future. And it is on the supposition that that gracious exhortation has been laid to heart that the Lord comes forth with abundant and adapted promises, among them the promise of the text.

I. The dew falls very quietly and gently. So is God to His people when He comes to revive and bless them. The soul must have times of recruiting and replenishment, and probably times of silence. The filling of the hidden springs, the growing of the secret inward strength, will be, the "man knoweth not how," as is the growing of the flowers, as is the falling of the dew.

II. The dew falls very copiously. In the land of Israel it falls much more abundantly than in this country. God's grace to a Church in a time of spiritual quickening is very copious and full. When hearts are opened to Him in expectation they never close again in collapse and disappointment.

III. The dew is very refreshing. It makes dying nature live. When God comes in fulfilment of this promise there is a recovery of sinking strength, a kindling of dying graces, a returning to the first love, a doing of the first works. To those who are so visited there is a newness in religion every day.

IV. The dew is fertilizing. This silent, copious, refreshing agent works fruitfulness out of all growing things. And when God is as the dew unto Israel, His final end is that the plants of His right hand's planting may become *fruitful.*

V. Note, as another analogy, the nearness to us in both cases of the reviving influence—God does not fetch the dew from stars, or from fountains in the skies. He condenses and distils it out of the atmosphere. May not this remind us how we are surrounded with a very atmosphere of grace, which holds all precious things in readiness to be dropped upon us when God shall command it so? The word of life is "nigh unto us," as near the soul as the atmosphere is to the body.

A. RALEIGH, *Quiet Resting Places*, p. 23.

REFERENCE: xiv. 5.—*Preacher's Lantern*, vol. ii., p. 634.

Chap. xiv., vers. 5, 6.—"I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon."

I. God begins: "I will be as the dew unto Israel." Of dew we may notice several things. (1) It is beautiful and glistening; but the process by which it is formed, and the way by which it comes, are hidden from us,—as behind a veil, in mystery. (2) Dew is always proportionate. The greater the need, the larger the supply; the hotter the day, the thicker it lies; and by refreshing where it falls it tends to vitality and growth. (3) And it comes faithfully, morning and evening, wherever it is wanted, and never fails. That is like God. How the Holy Spirit distils upon us, or why, we cannot tell. The commencement of the Divine life and its supplies are perfectly inscrutable. The workings are secret, but the results are patent. And just as I want it, I find it. It comes fullest in the morning of our hottest conflicts, and the fiercer and most searching days of trial have their richest drops. At evening what is the most worked is the most renovated. And without it all the soul's verdure and all the soul's life would wither and die.

II. Now trace the consequences on the man himself. The metaphor is sustained. It is by the dewlike, gentle workings of God's Spirit, by myriads of drops, each imperceptibly small. "He shall grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon," etc. There are five things: growth, strength, expansion, beauty, fragrance.

III. They that dwell under His shadow shall return. We all cast our shadows; and the influence we carry, the effect we produce,—may be, and should be, and must be, always for good and for God. And this is the characteristic of the Christian, that "they that dwell under his shadow shall return"—return to what they have lost: return to peace; return to that good land; return to Canaan; return to their God.

J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 10th series, p. 181.

Hosea's picture of what the state of Israel would be, in returning to righteousness and becoming reconciled to heaven, is composed—curiously and daintily composed—of rich colours, drawn from various sources. To his glowing anticipation, no *single* image sufficed to represent the approaching glory. For an adequate portrayal of the brilliant prospect which his eyes beheld, he had to borrow and cull from this quarter

and that—to gather and combine many things—selecting here a little and there a little, and binding the medley together, in one. And it is his eclecticism here that I find inviting and suggestive; his free flitting from object to object, in order to collect materials for an image of perfection.

I. It reminds me of what we need to recognize and act upon, both in the intercourse of life and in the pursuit of truth. No man is worth accepting wholly, and every man has a grace and glory of his own that is worth searching out. See on the one hand, how we renounce and shut ourselves up from canine, snarling, disagreeable people as though there were no lingering lines of beauty in them with which to cultivate acquaintance. See on the other hand, our tendency to hero-worship; to insulate and set up on high and warn off criticism from the man who has shown himself grand and supreme in two or three points, or perhaps in a single quality: how we foolishly assume him to be equally grand and supreme all round on all sides. What is needed is, that we should be more ready and quick to discern the special grace, and the consequent essentialness, of every unit in the crowd, and less ready and quick to *confine* ourselves to any.

II. The perfect man *is* here, but not to be brought together and expressed in any single personality. We can approximate towards securing the benefit and use of him by *association*, uniting in work, study, and intercourse, what we each have —our various distinctive characters and attainments. Instances of this may be seen in politics, in Church fellowship, in differing religious views. What we need in order to a growing discernment of the universe of spiritual truth among us is, *comprehension*—the comprehension within our circle of intercourse, of as many visions and impressions of earnest brother-souls as possible.

S. A. Tipple, *Echoes of Spoken Words*, p. 187.

References: xiv. 5-7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 342; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xxii., 348. xiv. 7.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 163. xiv. 8.—A. Maclaren, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 159; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1339; vol. x., No. 557; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 252. xiv. 9.—J. M. Gibson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 344.

JOEL.

REFERENCES: i. 1-4.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 29. i. 5.—*Ibid.*, p. 31. i. 6, 7.—*Ibid.*, p. 32. i. 8-10.—*Ibid.*, p. 34. i. 9.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iii., p. 65. i. 11, 12.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 36. i. 13, 14.—*Ibid.*, p. 169. i. 15.—*Ibid.*, p. 171. i. 16-18.—*Ibid.*, p. 172. i. 19-20.—*Ibid.*, p. 174. ii. 1.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, pp. 163, 272; J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, Part II., p. 342. ii. 1-11.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 176. ii. 12.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 1st series, pp. 36, 38; H. Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 145; *Short Sermons for Family Reading*, p. 121; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 120. ii. 12,-13.—E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, 2nd series, p. 138; Bishop How, *Plain Words*, 1st series, p. 33. ii. 12-14.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 178; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 87. ii. 13.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 353; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 324; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xviii., p. 90; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 419. ii. 15.—Bishop How, *Plain Words*, 2nd series, p. 82. ii. 15-17.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 317. ii. 17.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Septuagesima to Ash Wednesday*, pp. 352, 362. ii. 18-20.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 319. ii. 21-27.—*Ibid.*, p. 320. ii. 28-32.—*Ibid.*, p. 321; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 360.

Chap. ii., ver. 25.—"And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten."

I. THE coming of the locusts was a day of the Lord; a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, a day of bustle and heartrending calamity, of which fathers would tell their children, and children to the generations yet unborn. And as all things are double, one against another—as the types of the physical have their antitypes in the spiritual world—so is there not something of which the locusts are an emblem and which is yet more terrible than they—a mysterious something, at which in our healthy state we shudder, as though an evil spirit passed us by in the darkness? The fall of the first accursed locust, on the smiling plain is not one-tenth part so awful as the first little cloud of evil that flung its shadow over the innocence of a still youthful life.

II. Thickly as the locust-swarms may be over our past years,

utterly as they may have wasted a vain and misguided boyhood, or a passionate foolish youth, yet the very worst of us need not despair. For what cause is it that God gives us the gift of time, if it be not that we may repent therein? Once more sow the seed, and plant the vineyard in the furrows of the contaminated soil. Poor may be the aftermath, scant the gleaning of grapes upon life's topmost branches, that may be left for thee; yet do thou thy best to redeem these from the locust-swarm. The Holy One who inhabiteth eternity reaches to us out of His eternity the fingers of a man's hand, and touches into green life again the years that the locust hath eaten. Even the memory of guilt He will alleviate. Sometimes as we float down the river of life, memory flashes up from the hidden depths, and the dark wave is peopled with the innumerable faces of once-forgotten sins which menace us from the waters and prophesy of death. But God can enable us to gaze unshudderingly on these faces, and say with thankful emotion, "These sins are not mine; they were mine, but they are forgiven."

F. W. FARRAR, *The Fall of Man*, p. 292.

REFERENCES: ii. 25.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 305; J. Vaughan, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 273.

Chap. ii., ver. 26.—"And My people shall never be ashamed."

THERE are three respects in which the promise of our text may be regarded as applying to those who answer to the description of the people of God. The believer has no cause to be ashamed: (1) When he searches into himself; (2) when he stands before the world; (3) when he stands before God.

I. It is proved by daily experience that, when his own heart is laid open to a man, he shrinks from the scene of foulness and deformity, and could not endure, for any consideration, that others should see him in the light in which he now sees himself. He cannot look into a single recess of his heart without finding fresh cause for confusion of face; inasmuch as the more he knows himself, the more he sees of his moral uncleanness, the more he ascertains that he is everything at which he should blush, and has nothing in which he should trust. The conscience of the believer may charge him with many offences, and bring him in guilty of much that is at variance with the law of God, but if he have respect unto all God's commandments, conscience may produce the catalogue, and yet not put him to shame. Conscience can have nothing with which to rebuke

him, and therefore he can have nothing to be ashamed of at the tribunal of conscience, if he have not sinned in contempt of its remonstrances, and if he have shown a heartfelt repentance for sins committed.

II. Nothing but a clear conscience will enable us to look the world calmly and fearlessly in the face. The people of God must carry religion with them into every business of life, and see that all scenes are pervaded by its influence. They must have respect unto all the commandments; to make exceptions is to make a breach by which shame comes in. And if it be their endeavour to keep all the commandments, we know not why Christians should not bear themselves with that lofty dignity which no calumny can disturb.

III. The people of God need not be ashamed when brought into the presence of God. They have respect unto all God's commandments, and amongst these from the first have been reckoned the commandments which relate to faith. Here we have the groundwork of confidence before God, notwithstanding our own insufficiency. If there be respect to that commandment which enjoins that we take Christ as our surety, and depend on His merits, what cause remains for shame—even though it be the High and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity in whose presence we stand? "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?"

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1541.

No person can doubt that a great part of the unhappiness and of the sin which there is in the world consists in a sense of shame. And by shame I mean a consciousness of mortified distress. So powerful a feeling is it, and so saddening, that God has thought it not unworthy to be recorded even among the joys of paradise, that its inhabitants were "not ashamed." Look at the different kinds of shame to which we are all subject.

I. Among the shames which we have all felt, we must place our retrospects. And here I mean in a twofold sense: the shame of beginnings which have had no endings, and the shame of beginnings which have ended in nothing but disappointment and wretchedness. Paul summed it all up long ago, about a man of the world: "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" And he drew the contrast with the Christian: "But this hope maketh not ashamed." The child of God is not like the man who began to

build a tower, and had never calculated how he could finish it; but long since he has laid his foundation in God's own faithfulness, and he has been careful before he began to connect his work with God's glory. So he goes on in a holy confidence, while the very confidence he holds commands the issue.

II. There is another sense of shame—I mean the feeling of present loneliness. To be alone in what is good, does, of itself, tend to make a man ashamed. The remedy for the feeling of shame in standing alone for Christ and truth is in the conviction of the sacred presences that are with us and about us. Let such an one, who is ashamed of the "shame" of standing alone, read the latter part of the twelfth of Hebrews, and see to what he is come, and in the midst of which he is placed every moment; and the sense of that spiritual companionship will take away all his "shame," and he will feel how God gave His promise to all His own sorrowful ones: "My people shall never be ashamed."

III. Is not sin in its very nature a shame, and does not a Christian feel, more than any other, the "shame," the deep shame, of sin? You must remember that faith cuts off all painful retrospects; but if that man be living, as he ought to be living, in the assurance of God's love, the shame is so swallowed up and lost in the feeling of forgiveness, and Christ's glory is so his glory in it, that his eye may weep indeed, but it will still look up; the man may be in the dust, but his heart is in the heavens; he is humble, but he is not dejected; he is cast very low, but not ashamed.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 220.

REFERENCE: ii. 26.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1,098. ii. 28-32.—*Pulpit Analyst*, vol. i., p. 571. ii. 32.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1931. iii. 1-8.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 449. iii. 9-17.—*Ibid.*, p. 450. iii. 14.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 207. iii. 16.—W. H. Jackson, *Christian Word Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 107. iii. 18-21.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 452. iii. 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 379.

JOEL.—S. Cox, *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. ii., pp. 9, 74, 137, 209, 265, 329; R. Smith, *Ibid.*, vol. iv., pp. 215, 349, 400.

AMOS.

REFERENCES: i. 1-5.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 39. i. 3. to ii. 6-8.—*Ibid.*, p. 40. ii. 9-11.—*Ibid.*, p. 301. ii. 11, 12.—*Ibid.*, p. 302; F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 177. ii. 13.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 304. ii. 14-16.—*Ibid.*, p. 305. iii. 1, 2.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 72. iii. 2, 3.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 216.

Chap. iii., ver. 3.—"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

THE words of our text are in themselves so general, that they might very well stand alone as a proverbial truth, capable of a vast variety of applications. They would furnish an ample theme for many important lessons of practical prudence. It must be understood that the "walking together" signifies co-operation, a *working* together for some common end. And then we see at once how impossible this is, without some previous agreement.

I. It is recorded of Enoch and of Noah that each of them walked *with* God. With regard to other holy men, it is said of some, that they walked *before* God—as Abraham was charged to do by the Lord Himself: "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect"—of others, that they walked "after God." The various forms of expression may be considered as amounting to nearly the same thing, as denoting an extraordinary degree of piety and holiness in the persons so described.

II. Israel's walking with God in the ordinances of His house, could, in the case of individual members of the Church, be no proof of their agreement with Him. The difference between the form and the substance, and the utter worthlessness of the form when separated from the substance, was never overlooked; and it was one of the themes on which the prophets dwelt most frequently in strains of the most solemn warning. If the agreement did not previously exist, the most exact observance of the legal ceremonies not only was quite powerless to produce it, but had the effect of widening the breach.

III. In the worship of the Church on earth there is, and always must be, an admixture of elements foreign to its real

nature, but needed for the supply of our temporal wants. Still this worship may and should be, whatever it may be beside, the highest expression, the culmination and efflorescence, of the Christian life. If the flower, which witnesses to the healthy life and growth of the plant, is severed from the stalk, it soon fades and withers, loses its colours and its fragrance, and is only fit to be swept away as worthless refuse. So it is with our worship; though its words should be suited to the lips of seraphs, and its forms worthy of the court of heaven, if it is to us a mere outward thing, having no root or ground in our inner life. BISHOP THIRLWALL, *Good Words*, 1876, p. 125.

APPLYING the text to God's law and man's conscience, the first question is, How they fell out; and the second, How they fell in again. Sin is the cause of the quarrel, and righteousness by faith is the way to peace.

I. The Disagreement. Notice separately the fact and its consequences. (i) The fact that there is an alienation. God's law is His manifested will for the government of His creatures. It is the reflection cast down on earth of His own holiness. His moral law, ruling spirits, is as inexorable as His physical law, ruling matter. It knows of no yielding, no compunction. The conscience of man is that part of his wonderful frame that comes into closest contact with God's law—the part of the man that lies next to the fiery law, and feels its burning. When first the conscience is informed and awaked, it discovers itself *guilty*, and the law *angry*. There is not peace between the two, and by the constitution of both, they are neighbours. They touch at all points, as the air touches the earth or the sea; neither the one nor the other can avoid the contact. There is need of peace in so close a union; but there is not peace. The law's enmity against a guilty moral being is intense and total. (ii) The consequence of this disagreement between the two is, they cannot walk together. Enmity tends to produce distance. Distance is disobedience. To walk with the law, is to live righteously; not to walk with the law, is to live in sin. Where love is the fulfilling of the law, hate and distance must be the highest disobedience.

II. The Reconciliation. (i) The nature of the reconciliation and the means of attaining it. The agreement between the law and the conscience is a part of the great reconciliation between God and man, which is effected in and by Jesus Christ. He is our peace. Peace of conscience follows in the train of

justification. (2) The effect of the agreement is obedience to the law—that is, the whole Word of God. When there is a quarrel between friends, and a mutual distrust, there is no walking together; but when the enmity is removed and friendship restored, you may soon see the friends by each other's side again; so also is it with the law and the conscience. It ceases to accuse, and you cease to keep it at a distance.

W. ARNOT, *Roots and Fruits of the Christian Life*, p. 314.

"CAN two walk together except they be agreed?" is the first of a long string of questions forming an animated and striking passage, but not very easy to interpret. The general idea seems to be that every effect has a cause, and every cause an effect. If the question of the text belongs, as it appears to do, to the same subject with the rest, it seems to say that if two persons take a journey, or so much as a walk in each other's company, that very fact implies a foregoing cause, which is, in this case, the mutual consent or agreement of the two persons concerned.

We have here before us two thoughts.

I. Life is a Divine-human companionship. It is a walk, a little circuit from the door to the door, a circumscribed round for health and for business, of which home is alike the place left and the place returned to—the door of crossing in the morning, the door of re-entrance at evening. You will say this gives the idea of monotony and uneventfulness; it seems to exclude any possibilities of great change or high ambition. Be it so; it is the more like most lives, the average existences, not of the great and noble, but of the bulk and multitude of our fellow-creatures. To walk with God is a different figure from that of travelling or voyaging under God's charge or supervision; to walk with God is to take the daily round of common being in God's company, with God for your companion. To walk with God is to have God with you, consciously, and by choice, in the everyday occupation and the everyday society. To walk with God is to lead a godly and a Christian life.

II. The condition of that companionship is a Divine-human agreement. The text says that there must be a consenting will, there must be a harmony of feeling on the two sides to make the Divine-human companionship possible, otherwise it will degenerate into an empty profession, a heartless form, a riven bond, a broken vow.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Family Churchman*, Oct. 6th, 1886.

RELIGION is, essentially, a social thing. The tendency of all sin is towards solitude. It is to division, to a narrow and a narrowing division. For the most part, as a man becomes wicked, he becomes solitary. The object of the grace of God is always union, union of every kind. It makes one Christ in two hearts and that makes two hearts one: it makes two hearts like Christ, and the resemblance leads them to draw together. They walk together because they are agreed.

II. If you look at man as a social being you may conceive him in three relations. There is his relation to his fellow-man; there is his relation to angels; there is his relation to God. With these three different beings man has to walk. And in each case God lays down one rule, that before there can be harmony in action there must be agreement in principle. To take the metaphor of a walk: they must be agreed as to where they are going, and by what path they are travelling. They need not always exactly place step with step. But the end must be the same end, and the means must be generally the same.

III. What is God's end? Always and invariably His own glory. And what is the path which leads to it? Only one—holiness. The path of holiness, to the glory of God. That walk may be rough, but you walk with God.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 242.

REFERENCES: iii. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 597; J. Cook, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 181; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 164. iii. 3-6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 705. iii. 6.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 295; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 426; F. Hastings, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 346. iii. 7, 8.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 73. iii. 11-15.—*Ibid.*, p. 74. iv. 1-3.—*Ibid.*, p. 139. iv. 2.—E. D. Solomon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 101. iv. 4, 5.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 140. iv. 6, 11.—*Ibid.*, p. 198.

Chap. iv., ver. 12.—"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

PREPARE to meet thy God, O Israel"—*i.e.* prepare thyself, if penitent, to meet Him with supplications, prayers, and tears; but if still hardened and impenitent, to encounter His just vengeance and fiery indignation. This warning is no less applicable or necessary for us than it was for Israel. As Christians, as immortal spirits redeemed by the blood of Jesus the Son of God, placed here for a little space on our passage and trial for eternity; *preparation* is our business, and our only business; preparation, that is, for the great changes which are drawing

on upon us, and of which we must all soon be witnesses; but whether in joy or in sorrow, in hope or in despair, it is left to ourselves to determine. Religious preparation implies in it at least these three things: (1) Serious forethought; (2) actual search and inquiry; (3) a resolute course of practice suitable to what appears to be the truth of our condition with respect to the future.

I. Serious forethought. As the great distinguishing mark which at present separates us from the beasts that perish, is the power of exercising reason and reflection, so is this power in nothing more wonderfully shown than in our being capable of looking forward, and ascertaining with a considerable degree of certainty, what will be the consequences of our conduct, both on this side the grave and beyond it. If a person does not live in constant forethought and anxiety about his eternal state, he must somehow or other be going wrong.

II. This forethought and anxiety, if it be sincere, and at all proportionate to the importance of the subject, will lead us to search also and inquire what our prospects really are; what promises and threatenings are before us to be fulfilled in eternity; and in what degree our conduct at present may produce effects to be felt, for good or evil hereafter, for ever. It is quite necessary that time should be spent and attention bestowed, in closely examining what may be called the accounts of our souls.

III. We must resolutely maintain a course of practice suitable to the prospect that is before us. As the blood of Christ Jesus is all our hope and dependence, so His will must be all our rule and guidance. And take we good heed lest, while we profess faith in His blood, we forget or neglect His will.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. i., p. 287.

THAT man has still to learn the real lesson of life, who has not yet been taught to read it, in all its chapters of joy and sorrow, as one great preparation for another world. But between us and that coming state, there lies an event, of which it is impossible to over-estimate the importance and the dignity. For in passing out of this world into another, we must, every one of us, meet God.

I. What the exact character of that meeting shall be, I shall not commit the rash act of endeavouring to unfold. (1) It is likely that at that moment the whole of the past life will re-live

and stand out in its clearness; just as pictures which are fading, are sometimes, by certain processes, restored, in a moment, to their original brightness. (2) In that interview with God, the past and the future will come together: the past, to its crisis; the future to its doom.

II. Our view of God, at least our first view of God, will be of the Godhead as it is in Christ. And if in Christ it must be in human form. Christ has never laid aside His body. Never divide the thought of the God you are going to meet, from that of the Man Christ Jesus; but let Jesus in all His exalted manhood, Jesus in all the perfections of His work, be present to you by the eye of faith, whenever you hear the words said, "Prepare to meet thy God."

III. Notice the propriety and the wisdom of the exact words which the Holy Spirit has selected. It is "thy God"—thine own God—whom you are to be ready to meet. For it is He who made you. God—the sinner's God—it is He who has given Himself for you, He in whom all Heaven is thine. And do you only feel him thine—make Him thine by a strong act of appropriating faith—then do not doubt that you will be able to meet Him as thine, and it will leave you nothing else to contemplate. If you can say the last words, you need not be afraid of the first words: "Prepare to meet thy God."

IV. If you would meet God well when you come to die, it must not be the first time. You must have met Him very often before, while you are living down on the earth. By "meeting God," here, I understand two things: (1) To go forth, to respond, with your whole heart, to those approaches, which God is continually making, by His Spirit, to your soul; (2) to have as much intercouse as you can with God, in your own retirement, in thought, prayer, and sacred study of the Bible. Put yourself in frequent converse with the grandnesses of an unseen world. These things will be the rehearsing of that greater meeting which is to come; the practising of that high part which you are one day to take.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 195.

AN appeal to justice.

I. Justice is a primary element of human thought; but justice presupposes another idea—the idea of right. Justice is the virtue which takes care of the rights of other beings—which not merely avoids interference with these rights, but gives them what they claim; and the right of a being is the claim

which it can make in virtue of the law of its nature. Human justice is the assertion of the rights of man; and that phrase, or an equivalent, has been a power again and again in human history.

II. The power of the idea of justice as between man and man is seen chiefly in this, that the present does not satisfy it. There is no room for it in the world at any existing moment, and those who are keen about it, and anxious that its claims should be respected, are obliged to look forward. Read Amos; read him from this point of view. He is so full of the future, because the idea of justice which he possesses, which inspires him, makes him so dissatisfied with the present. In various ways he summons Israel to the work of social and moral regeneration. He bids Israel arise in awe and prepare to meet his God.

III. But there are other rights towards which justice has duties—other rights than the rights of man. The most eloquent defenders of human rights have not seldom forgotten that there are such rights as the rights of God. God has His rights, too, as man has his, and to be just is to satisfy all rights whatever; the rights of man, assuredly, but also not less certainly, the rights of Him from whom all human rights are gifts—the rights of the self-existent and perfect Being who made us.

And this, too, was felt by Amos, for Amos is the prophet of an absolute and adequate justice, not merely of a justice between man and man, but also of justice as between man and God. In the eyes of Amos the accumulating injustice of Israel towards God was ever making it more and more inevitable that Israel and God should meet in judgment. He knew, as we Christians should know, that the ever-swelling tide of mental and moral rebellion against the Ruler of the universe is by a law which cannot fail to assert itself, bringing His judgment, whether temporal or final, nearer and nearer.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1074.

I. AMOS is specially the poor man's prophet, for he was a poor man himself; not a courtier like Isaiah, or a priest like Jeremiah, or a sage like Daniel; but a herdsman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit in Tekoa, near Bethlehem, where Amos was born. What was the secret of this inspired herdsman's strength? He believed and preached the kingdom of God and His righteousness: the simple but infinite difference between right and wrong, and the certain doom of wrong, if wrong was persisted in.

II. In the time of Amos, the rich tyrants of Israel seem to have meant by the "day of the Lord" some vague hope that in those dark and threatening times He would interfere to save them, if they were attacked by foreign armies. But woe to you that desire the day of the Lord, says Amos the herdsman. You will find it very different from what you expect. There is a day of the Lord coming, he says, therefore prepare to meet your God. But you are unprepared, and you will find the day of the Lord very different from what you expect. It will be a day in which you will learn the righteousness of God. Because He is good, He will not permit you to be bad. The day of the Lord to you will be darkness and not light; not, as you dream, deliverance from the invaders, but ruin by the invaders, from which there will be no escape.

III. No wonder that the Israelites thought Amos a most troublesome and insolent person. No wonder that the smooth priest Amaziah begged him to begone and talk in that way somewhere else. The two could no more work together than fire and water. Amos wanted to make men repent of their sins, while Amaziah wanted only to make them easy in their minds; and no man can do both at once. When a man dares to preach like Amos, he is no more likely to be popular with the wicked world, than Amos was popular, or St. Paul was popular, or our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave both to Amos and to St. Paul their messages, was popular.

C. KINGSLEY, *Good Words*, 1876, p. 195.

I. PRUDENCE,—what is it? Why need I ask the question? Looked at from an every day, from a popular, point of view, prudence is the first, perhaps, of all the virtues—the most needed for the well-being of human life. Prudence in man is not unlike the higher forms of instinct in the animals, only human prudence knows better what it is about than does animal instinct. Prudence in man does two things: it thinks, and it either acts or it decides to abstain from acting. It looks beyond the present moment. It is foresight with a practical object. And when prudence addresses itself to higher matters, it is as before, in this twofold character still thought, still action, only it commands a wider horizon. Its thought reaches away beyond the grave. It acts or it hesitates to act, with an eye to eternity. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, in His teaching, continually appeals to that which, if exercised on a sufficient field, will secure to man his truest happiness.

II. Amos is the prophet and the apostle of prudence throughout his book. To Amos, a simple pious soul, caring chiefly or rather exclusively, about questions of truth or falsehood, and right and wrong, and caring little, or rather not at all, about the vulgar glitter of a God-forgetting civilization, it was clear that the state of things in Samaria could not last. While the sky was yet bright and the prospect fair, Amos hears the whispered mutterings of the yet distant tempest. There were past judgments to which he points as earnests of the future. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." What had been might yet be—would yet be—aye, and more also. It was an appeal to prudence.

III. "Prepare for death," surely this is the voice of prudence. The one thing certain about life is that we must leave it. The one thing certain about death is that we must die. Scripture says, experience echoes, it is appointed. "Prepare to meet thy God:" (1) In death; (2) in judgment.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,060.

AN appeal to Desire:—

I. Desire is meant, first of all, to keep man loyal to the Being who made him. God is the ultimate object of desire. He meant to be so. He gave us desire, that it might be so. Just as any small meteoric mass in the near neighbourhood of this earth cannot but draw near to it, in obedience to what we call the law of gravitation, so souls are impelled by desire or love of God, and freely as moral beings, yet incessantly, to move towards Him as their centre of moral gravitation.

But human nature, as we find it, is like a beautiful instrument in which everything has been more or less dislocated and put out of gear by some terrible shock; and thus desire in us fallen men, instead of concentrating itself upon God, lavishes itself like a spendthrift upon anything and everything that is not God. The object of religion is, if possible, to restore desire—this fund of motive force—to its true track, its true direction, and having restored it, to maintain it there.

II. "Prepare to meet thy God." When desire is alienated from God, and is spent on created objects, as if they were adequate and satisfactory, these words cannot but carry with them a very solemn meaning. They mean, evidently, at least this: Prepare, O man, for a meeting which will show thee that thy life has been a vast mistake—that thou hast neglected and forgotten the one Being who is really worth its efforts.

III. In order to set desire free to return to its original direction, God has an agency at command in this His human world by which this work is effected. That agency is pain. Pain is the disappointment and the defeat of desire, arising either from the discovery that an object is worthless, or that it is vanishing.

The words of the text bid us wed desire to understanding, that true understanding of the real meaning and conditions of our existence, which God gives to those who keep His law with their whole heart. Desire and understanding are the parents of will. When will is supreme in a regenerate soul even the crooked places are made straight and the rough places plain, as of old across the desert for the passage of God, everything is welcomed because everything, either as an assistance or as a discipline, must further one purpose—that of reaching the supreme object of desire—the vision of God.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,076.

AN appeal to Reverence:—

I. Reverence is not in any sense a fictitious sort of virtue. Like all virtue that deserves the name, it is based on truth. The truth of some greatness which the soul acknowledges must be seriously felt if there is to be real reverence. The lesson of reverence is learned: (1) from the natural world around us; (2) from man himself.

II. Israel was irreverent, and Israel was to meet God in suffering. And therefore Amos says "Prepare." And so, too, with us Christians, as to death and judgment. Is it not true, that in our ordinary lives, God, if I may say so, takes His chance amid a thousand objects of interest? The day is coming when we shall see Him. What must not that sight mean to those who come upon it suddenly, and without having given an hour of reverent thought to it in their whole lives? What should it not exact in the way of preparation from that instinct, that original instinct of reverence, which neither nature nor man, nor the blessings that we have in the Christian Church militant, nor anything short of the unveiled face of God Himself, will lastingly satisfy.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,064.

I. WHAT it will be to "meet our God," no heart of man can conceive; for what thought of man can ever understand what God is? The sea and mountains speak of Him and of His

power and greatness; and the sky above us, and the sun and stars, and storm and thunder: all these speak of Him when they appeal to the heart of man, and make him to be amazed and lost in admiration of them. Every corner of the world which He fills with His awful presence, and the heart of every man in which He is wonderfully present, speak of Him. But what must the Almighty God Himself be? and what must it be to meet Him and to appear before Him? Man cannot know Him, nor comprehend Him, excepting so far as He is taught by the Spirit of God; so far as man does know Him, he must love and fear Him more and more; they who do not fear Him above all things, know Him not, and most miserable are they. Who shall be prepared to meet this pure and holy, this all-knowing and all-powerful God? And yet of all things future none is so certain as this, that we must meet our God, and appear one by one before Him.

II. The thought of meeting God is in itself so awful that we might have been disposed to sit down in despair at the thought of it, were it not for the access to the Father which we have in Jesus Christ, who is Himself the way, the truth, and the life, and no man cometh unto the Father but by Him. He is now set before us as our perfect Example; as our High Priest, to intercede with God for us; as our King; but when He shall appear as our Judge, then we must remember that He will be seen not as man only—concealing, as it were, from our sight His Divine power and unspeakable Godhead; but He will appear as God also, in His own glory and in the glory of the Father, and with all the holy angels with Him.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. vii., p. 225.

REFERENCES: iv. 12.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Septuagesima to Ash Wednesday*, p. 209; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 923; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 361; W. Jay, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 217. iv. 12, 13.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 200. v. 8.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 123; W. M. Statham, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 312; G. Bainton, *Ibid.*, vol. x., p. 190; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 85; J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 243. v. 10.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 56; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 78. v. 18, 19.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 332. vi. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 417. vi. 1-6.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 139. vi. 7-11.—*Ibid.*, p. 140. vi. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1,470. vi. 12-14.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 141. vii. 7.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 327.

Chap. vii., vers. 10-15.

I. THERE is something very wonderful, and at the same time most natural, in the expansion of mind which a man brought up as Amos was, acquires when he has been raised out of himself and has been made to understand the glory and the guilt of his country. He knew that he was speaking of one who was true and in whom was no lie; he knew that he was testifying against lies; he knew that the whole universe and the consciences of those who heard him, however they might turn away from him or persecute him, were on his side, and were acknowledging his sentence to have issued from the mouth of the Lord Himself.

II. Amos would not have left his sheepfolds to denounce the idolatries of Israel if he had not felt that men, that his own countrymen, were maintaining a fearful fight against a will which had a right to govern them, and which could alone govern them for their good. He could not have been sustained in the witness which He bore if an ever-brightening revelation of the perfect goodness—of that goodness, active, energetic, converting all powers and influences to its own righteous and gracious purposes—had not accompanied revelations, that became every moment more awful, of the selfishness and disorder to which men were yielding themselves. It is precisely because he has not only history and experience to guide him, but the certainty of an eternal God, present in all the convulsions of society, never ceasing to act upon the individual heart when it is most wrapped in the folds of its pride and selfishness—it is precisely because he finds this to be true, whatever else is false, that he must hope.

F. D. MAURICE, *Prophets and Kings of the Old Testament*, p. 155.

REFERENCES: viii. 1.—*Pulpit Analyst*, vol. i., p. 167. viii. 1, 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 343. viii. 2.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 186. viii. 11.—W. Wilkinson, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 205. ix. 1.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 217.

Chap. ix., vers. 2-4.—"Though they dig into hell, thence shall Mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down:" etc.

WHAT a variety, what a reduplication of expression in order to represent as utterly impossible that the parties who are here threatened could escape the vengeance of their God! It matters

not where they might be, or whither they might betake themselves, the agency of vengeance is always close at hand. These words assert to us the greatness, the certainty, the ubiquity of Divine vengeance.

I. Consider the text as illustrated in the case of the Jews. If it were specially in the destruction of Jerusalem that these threatenings were accomplished, it is easy to show that at the same time, as well before as after, vengeance, as though by a kind of natural instinct, seized on the Jews wheresoever they were found. The history of the Jews, since their exile from Jerusalem, has been a history of fierce wrongs, disgraceful to the nations of the earth, of extortion, contempt, hatred, cruelty; the history of a people which every other seemed anxious to exterminate, or to preserve only that they might oppress. The serpent and the sword seemed to start forth wheresoever the exiles were found.

II. The text has reference to all men as well as to the Jews. In the kind of instinct with which vengeance has appeared to follow the exiles of Judea; in the mysterious but indissoluble association between themselves and suffering; we have but the picture of what has been universally appointed to the exiles from paradise. They may cross the ocean and ascend the mountain and dive into the cavern, but can never hide themselves from conscience, which, armed with fearful powers, is always ready to put on them the stamp of offenders, and to exact from them some of the penalties of offence. The commission of sin seems to produce the ministry of vengeance; its cry is heard as soon as the guilty pleasure has been enjoyed.

III. The words of the text may be applied to the second coming of Christ. The scenery of the last dread assize is brought into every district, yea, into every household of the world; and it does not sweep the earth of its inhabitants and gather them confusedly into one court of judicature, but it spreads that court of judicature over the whole earth; so that wheresoever a man is found, there is the white throne reared, there are the books opened, and there is the trumpet sounded.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,541.

REFERENCES: ix. 7-10.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 330. ix. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 825; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 172. ix. 11-15.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 331. ix. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 296. xi. 13.—*Ibid.*, vol. viii., No. 466; F. Hastings, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 261.

AMOS.—R. Smith, *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. iv., pp. 535, 599, 673, 727.

OBADIAH.

REFERENCES: Ver. 3.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 330. Ver. 11.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 205. Ver. 17.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 160; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 16; J. Edmond, *Ibid.*, vol. v., pp. 41, 114.

JONAH.

Chaps. i.—iv.

JONAH buried and risen a type of Christ.

I. More than once in the course of our Lord's ministry, among different persons and for different objects, He makes use of the similitude of the prophet's burial and resurrection. When the Jews asked for a sign He refused it, (i) because it was presumptuous to ask it; (ii) because they were blind to actual signs already given and constantly existing before their eyes; (iii) because the very demand was a proof of deep ungodliness, and the concession of it would have been a premium on religious disloyalty and impiety. No sign should be given them except the sign of the prophet Jonah, the very opposite to what they sought. They asked it from above. It should be from below. They asked that it might be glorious. It should be, according to the carnal judgment, ignominious. It should be from a dark sea of trouble, not from a firmament of brightness. It should be tempest, sorrow, death, burial; not sunshine, victory, enthronement.

II. Such we understand to be the meaning of our Lord's language in the comparison between Himself and Jonah. It is a comparison resting chiefly on the resemblance in humiliation—that of Jonah and that of Jesus. The general resemblance is apparent to anyone. Jonah was in the heart of the sea; Jesus was in the heart of the earth. Jonah was in the

"belly of hell," or the grave, or Hades; Jesus was actually traversing, living, in the invisible world, and acquiring thus His right to hold the keys. Jonah was there in punishment of his sin; Jesus (Himself sinless) was slain and consigned to the darksome grave by the sins of the world, which He bore and expiated on the Cross. Jonah was three days and three nights in his living grave; Jesus was the same time dead and buried. Jonah was restored to light and life; Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God, with power, by the resurrection from the dead."

A. RALEIGH, *The Story of Jonah*, p. 169.

Chap. i., vers. 1, 2.—"Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh," etc.

THE main features of the case are: (1) A Divine commission and command distinctly and authoritatively given, with some of the reasons for it annexed, although with others certainly not fully revealed. (2) A state of reluctance and suspense ever verging towards actual disobedience—expressing itself, now in remonstrance, now in request for exemptions, now in moody and distrustful silence. The situation is none so rare. The principles involved, and the lessons arising, are for all time.

I. We take occasion to force the supreme and unchallengeable obligation of the Divine will when clearly expressed. There can be no higher obligation to man or angel than that. Obedience, promptly, fully given, is the most beautiful thing that walks the earth. Prompt and simple obedience, when we are sure that God speaks, is the way to clearness, virtue, honour, strength, safety, peace.

II. The corresponding lesson is the exceeding danger of a mood of hesitation or remonstrance. All the sorrows of the sea sprang, like harvest, from Jonah's wrong mood at the time of his call on land. We should watch with great self-jealousy the moral hesitations of the will, and the silent petitionings for delay or exemption, and the attempts to have the case reasoned out more fully *after* the command has been heard, and the conviction of duty clearly produced. All such heart-movements are fraught with peril. Divine light is given for "walking" and "working." The Divine voice speaks, whether in the written law, or the living conscience apprehending it, *only* to be obeyed. In matters of expediency and prudence wait for the after-thoughts. In matters of conscience and present duty take the first thoughts that arise, for they are the divinest.

III. A practical difficulty with many will be to find a sufficient analogy between a call like this, a high call of God to an inspired prophet, requiring a service that would be memorable in the history of the world, and the simple calls of duty to Christian service—daily work. "There seems to be little resemblance. Little fitness, therefore, in a summons expressly supernaturally given, when applied to the ever-recurring duties and humble scenes of common life." On the contrary, there is all the fitness that need be desired. The Christian convictions, although produced insensibly and slowly, wrought out of knowledge, prayer, and effort, yet, *in authority*, take rank with the highest. They are the last results of a very long process. They are the fruit of the action of the Spirit of God, making use of all that has been done in the world for man's redemption.

A. RALEIGH, *The Story of Jonah*, p. 30.

REFERENCES: i. 1-3.—J. Menzies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 49; W. G. Blaikie, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 165.

Chap. i., ver. 3.—"But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord."

I. WE cannot understand the conduct of Jonah fully. We cannot judge it fairly without considering some things which seemed to him to be reasons against compliance with the Divine call. (1) It was a long way, many hundreds of miles, and a great part of it through a desert. (2) The thing to be done was very difficult. (3) It would be natural that he should despair of any great success. (4) He may have thought that, in the event of attaining a spiritual success, failure must come in another way. (5) It is quite clear that the prophet had some dark forecast of evil to his own country, from the probable turn which matters would take, if his mission at Nineveh should be successful.

II. "He rose up to flee from the presence of the Lord." The meaning of that expression we take to be that he retired, or wished to retire, from the prophetic office, at least for a time, and from that peculiar and sacred nearness to God which a true prophet, in service, always had. He knew that if he continued in that presence it would move soon, as did the pillar of old, and that he must go eastwards to escape, if possible, from that necessity. He went out of the presence westwards as fast and as far as he could. It is certainly worthy of notice that the way he fled was almost the direct opposite of the way he would have gone if he had done God's bidding.

III. He went down to Joppa. Always, to leave the presence of God is to go down. Down from communion, from a conscious faith, from quietness and assurance, from steady, firm obedience. Down into strife without victory, into toil without fruit. Down into mere bargain-making, mere money-making, mere pleasure-seeking, mere time-wasting. The success and glory of true life can be found only by keeping the *upward* road, in hearing and following the voice which says perpetually, "Come up hither."

IV. Jonah tells us with a minuteness and particularity evidently intentional, "he found a ship going to Tarshish," and "paid the fare thereof, and went down into it," etc. What is the prophet's object in such careful minuteness? (1) It may have been to keep himself in remembrance, and tell all the world how many steps there were, so to speak, in his downgoing. (2) He may have meant to teach us that the outward aspects of providence to us at any one time constitute a very insufficient and unsafe guide in matters of moral duty.

A. RALEIGH, *The Story of Jonah*, p. 52.

Chap. i., ver. 3—"He found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it," etc.

I. WHILE Jonah works God waits. When Jonah falls asleep, God begins to work. The scene is thus arrestive and striking. The man hasting away for days from "the presence," out among second causes and exterior things, into a blank world of indifference. Then God, with a touch of His hand, raising up those second causes, which hitherto had seemed to favour the flight, into an irresistible combination for the arrest and recovery of the fugitive. Men dig pits and fall into them. They weave webs and by a touch of His hand they are snared and taken.

II. "The mariners were afraid and cried every man unto his god." Not all to one heathen deity, but each man to his own god. When God is forsaken, men forsake each other. They lose the power of mutual sympathy and help in the highest things. Only the true worshippers have that great power—the power of social sympathy—working in full strength among them. And yet we have no ground for uttering one word of reproach or blame against these men. They did all that could be expected of them. They prayed and wrought. They cried to their gods, and cast the wares out of the ship; a clear and good example to all men who are in straits.

III. Let us take our last lesson from the heathen captain. (1) He teaches us by his example. He is master of the ship, and he feels that, in an hour of peril especially, it lies within his province to incite and constrain all who sail in the ship, and who, therefore, as passengers or sailors, are under his care, to the discharge of their very highest duties. Remember that you have religious duties to the full breadth and length of your mastery. (2) He teaches us by his words. These words of his have aroused many a sleeper besides Jonah. They have been heard through the ages since, as watchman's cry, as trumpet's sound, to awaken and save souls from death.

A. RALEIGH, *The Story of Jonah*, p. 76.

REFERENCES: i. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 622; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 56; E. Monro, *Practical Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 283; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 270.

Chap. i., ver. 4.—"But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken."

I. APPARENTLY with great unanimity, the sailors fall upon a scheme to discover the cause and reason of the storm, or at any rate, the person on whose account it has come. They all pray, and then cast lots. They did not mean it as a desperate chance stroke. In their intention it was a religious act. As such it was accepted, for the lot fell upon Jonah God uses the honest, although blind, endeavours of His creatures to discover truth and duty, to reveal to them in a measure what they are seeking, and at the same time to go on with the development of His own perfect providence. He takes *what there is* in the form of worship and service of Him, if it is the best that men can achieve in the circumstances.

II. The lot fell upon Jonah. The words spoken by the shipmaster at his berth, the falling of the lot upon him, the hurried questions of the crew, and the howling of the elements around, "awoke" him in the highest sense. He rose up as from a hideous dream, and stood once more before God and man, in openness, sincerity, and truth. "And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land." Few scenes in history have a darker grandeur than this confession of Jonah to these heathen sailors, when he *knew* that in a very short time he was to be cast into the sea. There is about his conduct a self-abnegation and a moral sublimity which are rarely found, among even good men.

III. Note the several expressions used in Jonah's confession. (i) "I am an Hebrew." The name by which the Jewish people were known to foreigners. The name came to them when as emigrants they passed the great river, the river Euphrates. *Passers-by* in life, not settlers anywhere on earth. Men of pilgrim spirit, seeking rest and home beyond death. (ii) "I am an Hebrew, and I fear"—*i.e.* serve, not I am afraid of, but, I serve in reverence, and trust, and love, —"the Lord"—Jehovah, the one living and true God—self-existent, self-sufficient, supreme, eternal. (iii) "The God of heaven"—a lofty title, often used in the Scriptures, and nearly always by God's servants, in speaking to heathens, signifying the creation, possession, and rule of the whole visible universe.

A. RALEIGH, *The Story of Jonah*, p. 99.

REFERENCES: i. 4-6.—W. G. Blaikie, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 165. i. 4-7.—J. Menzies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 75. i. 5, 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 469; S. Martin, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 5th series, No. 2. i. 6.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 173; J. N. Norton, *Golden Truths*, p. 138. i. 7-10.—W. G. Blaikie, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 167. i. 11-17.—*Ibid.*, p. 245; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 166. i. 12, 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 567.

Chap. i., ver. 15.—"So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging."

I. AMONG the many marvels of this Book not the least is that Jonah, the discovered culprit, should be constituted judge in his own case. (i) The sailors' appeal to Jonah was in fact an appeal to God. It carries with it a reverential recognition of His hand. (ii) Also, we must see in this question a recognition of the honesty and recovered manhood of Jonah. (iii) No doubt they had some regard also to his prophetic office, and to the fact that he did not seem to be released from it. He might, therefore, for all they knew, still be carrying about with him some supernatural powers, which, although held for a while in suspense, might perhaps yet avail for their deliverance.

II. There seems to have been no delay in the giving of the answer. "And he said unto them, Take me up and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you," etc. Is this simply a human answer, dictated by the workings of natural conscience, and expressive of the desire of a despairing heart, to have done with life altogether? Or is it the answer

of God Himself, to whom really, as we have supposed, appeal was made? Surely there can hardly be a doubt that the latter is the true supposition. His words show that he had a proper regard for the inviolable sacredness of his own life—that he recognized the principle, that only its Fountain and Giver could have the right to say when and where and how it was to be again given up to Him. The answer of Jonah is a virtual condemnation of suicide in any, in all, circumstances.

III. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land. These men knew the value of life—and not of their life alone, but also of that life that had brought all their trouble. And thus we alight upon the beautiful principle of our moral life, that every good thing in our spirit and action has a tendency to reproduce itself in others who are in any way related to it, especially, of course, if it is called forth for their advantage.

IV. Wearied and panting, the sailors cease at length from the bootless strife, and gather about the man whom they cannot save. Prayer precedes the last sad act that shall part them and their passenger for ever. (i) The prayer is to Jehovah, the true God. (ii) They prayed earnestly. (ii) They prayed submissively. (iv) It is a prayer for exemption from the guilt of innocent blood. (v) The defect of the prayer, if it has one, is this—they do not pray for Jonah.

And now at length, all being done that could be done to avert the sad necessity, and done quite in vain, they proceed to the solemn execution of the sentence. "So they took up Jonah—" lifted him, the meaning is, with respect and tenderness, bearing him as if with some sad honour to his grave, he himself making no resistance—"and cast him into the sea." The elements are appeased and satisfied.

A. RALEIGH, *The Story of Jonah*, p. 122.

I. NOTICE the storm raised. In the storm we have a striking image of life. For life is a voyage. We start from many ports, we touch at many others, we encounter many perils from wind and wave, we meet many storms; but they come from Him who "gathereth the winds in His fists." None of us must reckon on a continued calm if the sun shine on us for a little while, and think it will never rain again. If things go smooth and prosperously, we conclude that our mountain stands so strong it will never be moved. But you cannot have lived long in the world without learning that there are

clouds in the brightest sky, a moth in the loveliest robe, a worm in the tallest cedar, and dross in the purest gold. Yet, if we do not lose our hold of Christ, we know that the sun is *always* in the sky, though we cannot always see it; and that He has said of every storm which He sends: "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee."

II. We have here the storm hushed, and hushed by God. He remembered Jonah. He might have left Jonah to perish there, but He delivered him and brought him back from the gates of death. He can hush any storm. His clear, Divine, voice may be heard ringing above every tempest of life: "It is I; be not afraid."

J. FLEMING, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 782.

Chap. i., ver. 17.—"And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

WE have no external history of the days spent by the prophet in his living grave. Neither he nor anyone else can tell how far he travelled, how long he rested, what were the aspects of the scenery, how many "small and great beasts" were met on the journey—that strange but fruitful journey "through the paths of the seas." But we have a very intense and clear history of his *inward* life.

I. There was evidently a great and sudden quickening of consciousness. The man who speaks in this holy psalm hardly seems the same person whom we have seen in flight—dark, moody, silent, despairing. Now, and all at once, he seems to leap again into life—clear, fervent, passionate life. The burial of his body is the resurrection of his soul.

II. Rapidly this new consciousness became distressful. His soul fills itself fuller than the sea, with affliction. The reserved sorrow of long sinning comes all at once. He feels "cast out of God's sight," and shivers in the utter loneliness.

III. Then he began to "look"—upwards to earth, eastwards to the Temple where he knew that the lost Presence was richly manifested. "Ah, if I could but go there! If I might see but once again the priest, the altar, and the mercy-seat! I could then be content to die. But at any rate I will look. If I die looking, still I shall look till I die."

IV. The look soon became a cry: "I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord."

V. He began to be grateful. There was daybreak in the

land of the shadow of death. The sweet bloom of the morning smote down into the rayless depths, and revealed there the strangest sight those depths have ever disclosed—a living oratory and a thankful worshipper.

VI. Then, apparently, his soul passed into the more active state of renewed personal consecration to God.

VII. The final state of his mind is a state of entire dependence, involving a quiet and trustful surrender of the whole case to God. "Salvation is of the Lord."

A. RALEIGH, *The Story of Jonah*, p. 145.

REFERENCES: i. 17. to ii. 1-10.—J. Menzies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 94. i.—Parker, *City Temple*, vol. iii., p. 457. i. to iv.—J. Foster, *Lectures*, 2nd series, p. 1. ii. 1-7.—W. G. Blaikie, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 247. ii. 2-10.—*Ibid.*, p. 248.

Chap. ii., ver. 4.—"Then I said, I am cast out of Thy sight; yet I will look again toward Thy holy temple."

HINDRANCES and aids to prayer.

I. Prayer is founded on knowledge and prayer is prompted by desire. If then for knowledge there be error, and if instead of desire there be coldness, then is prayer hindered. It cannot be denied that we are all prone to error as to God's character and mind towards us. A wrong idea of God, of His character as unlovely, or of His mind as unloving towards us, is one chief impediment to the work of prayer. The other is a wrong feeling towards Him. Not misconception, not error, but (in the plainest sense of the words) some form or other of sin.

II. Whatever makes us know God better, and love Him more, will be an aid and help to prayer. (i) It is one chief office of the Bible to assist prayer by revealing God. Look upon it as you look upon visiting one who is to you as your own soul; an opportunity of increased knowledge, which increase of knowledge is evermore also an increase of love. (ii) Thus will it be also with the hearing of the Word in public. "Praying's the end of preaching." The value of each particular sermon may be estimated, not by the beauty of its language, and not by the power of its argument, but by this question rather, Did it make me pray? (iii) Another of the aids to prayer is what we term comprehensively the discipline of life. (iv) The chiefest of the helps to prayer is prayer,

Pray once, and you will pray again. Pray as you can to-day to-morrow you shall pray better.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Voices of the Prophets*, p. 177.

REFERENCES: ii. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1813. ii. 8.—J. Duncan, *The Pulpit and Communion Table*, p. 307. ii. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 131; *Ibid., Morning by Morning*, p. 57. ii. 10.—A. Watson, *Sermons for Sundays: Festivals and Fasts*, 3rd series, p. 399.

Chap. iii., ver. 1.—"And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee."

I. FROM Joppa the prophet probably went up to Jerusalem, to appear in the Temple, to which he had looked from the deep, to sacrifice to God with the voice of thanksgiving, to pay what he had vowed. Then, probably, he returned to Gath-hepher, his former home. And there, as it would seem, he was living when he received the second commission to go to Nineveh. Notice the points of identity between the first and the second commission. (i) God still needs to speak. (ii) Nineveh is still a great city. Therefore that is the place for Him to speak. There are also points of difference between the first and the second commission. (1) One respects Jonah himself, and glances, not reproachfully, but still in a spirit of fatherly faithfulness at his recent disobedience. "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, preach *the preaching that I bid thee*." Formerly he knew the message that he was to deliver. Now he is simply told that a message will be given him, but he is not to know it until he arrives at the place. He is relegated, as it were, from the position of the "friend who knoweth his Lord's will," to, or towards, that of the "servant who knoweth not." (2) The message is different in its substance also, to meet the change in Nineveh.

II. From Jonah's preaching in Nineveh we see: (i) The exceeding sinfulness of sin. The horror of great darkness which settles down with the night upon Nineveh is all brought by sin. (ii) The inflexible justice of God. (iii) The stupendous power a city has—power for good and power for evil.

A. RALEIGH, *The Story of Jonah*, p. 189.

REFERENCES: iii. 1-4.—W. G. Blaikie, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 250. iii. 2.—J. McC. Hussey, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 177; J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 279. iii. 4.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 333; J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 15th series, p. 85.

Chap. iii., ver. 5.—"So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them."

I. Our Lord tells us that "Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites." He was a sign (i) of the impartiality and inflexibility of the Divine justice. Prophet though he was, raised to a higher place of life than common men, admitted to a knowledge of some of the secrets of the Divine government of the world; in favour, as might be supposed, in the celestial court, he no sooner swerves and turns from the way of obedience, than God turns upon him the arrestive and vindicative powers of His government. He is pursued, convicted, cast into the deep. It will appear manifest to them that all nature serves God for His just occasions; that the nets of capture are already woven —spread wherever there can be the footsteps of flight; that storms are brooding in the air and vengeance sleeping in the sea, for those who choose to awake them. (i) He was also a sign of Divine mercy. For he is alive! He has been delivered. From sea and grave, and death and hell, he has come forth. He is not merely in life, he is in favour, once more, with God. Let us take this man as a sign of mercy, —repent and pray, and press towards the gate—see if it will not open a little wider. So the prophet was "a sign" unto them.

II. Notice the effects which are produced upon the city by Jonah's progress through it. They are such as no man ever produced in a single day, either before or since. They are such as could flow *only* from the presence and action of the mighty power, and the still mightier grace of God. A sense of God soon filled the city. It was shed from group to group, from street to street. It was awful, painful, at the first, like a "resurrection of condemnation," to their spirits. It turned them away from their own gods as effectually as the sailors in the ship were turned from theirs. "They believed God." Possessed of that faith, all that follows is natural and inevitable.

III. The proclamation which was the faithful exposition of the true sentiments, both of king and people, bears certain marks which we may briefly note. (i) We cannot fail to be struck with the comprehensiveness of it. The prohibition is over every human being, and over all the animals possessed by and related to man. (ii) Fasting was the first part of the decree. Fasting has been a religious exercise in the East as far back as history takes us. The efficacy of it will be more

or less, according to climate, individual temperament, and other circumstances. (iii) The covering with sackcloth was the next part of the decree. In its nature and purpose it is closely allied to fasting—with this difference, that it is visible. (iv) Each person is to utter a mighty cry. The Eastern nations have always been addicted to vocal demonstration for the expression of the stronger emotions. The "might," no doubt, is to be in the *desire* more than in the mere voice that utters it. (v) But by far the most striking and satisfactory characteristic of this proclamation is the last—that which requires from every man a personal and practical reformation: "Let them turn every one from his evil way."

A. RALEIGH, *The Story of Jonah*, p. 216.

REFERENCES: iii. 5-9.—J. Menzies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 100. iii. 5-10.—W. G. Blaikie, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 295. iii. 8.—J. N. Norton, *Golden Truths*, p. 152. iii. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 275.

Chap. iii., ver. 10.—"And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that He had said that He would do unto them; and He did it not."

I. IN the last verse of the third chapter we come upon a difficulty which has exercised the faith and called forth the ingenuity of interpreters. The difficulty is this, there are passages in Holy Scripture which assert in the strongest way that God *cannot* repent, and that He never does. There are certain other passages (of which this is one) which assert, just as strongly, that He *can* repent, and that, in fact, He has often done so.

II. If the question is put, "Why was not Nineveh destroyed? how can we reconcile the sparing of the city with Divine veracity, since there is no condition or qualification in the denouncing cry?"—the answer is, that the condition was involved and understood. The possibility of mercy was clearly understood by Jonah, for he was displeased with it. It was understood also by the Ninevites, for they cried for long days and nights. If God had made unreserved announcement of destruction, the city must have been destroyed, for He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? "Hath He said it, and shall He not do it?" "But He knew that the city would repent: why then did He threaten without any expressed reference to this eventuality?" The answer is, that He knew that the city would repent under the shadow of the

Divine commination. Not otherwise. The commination was uttered because it was deserved, because it suited the moral condition of the people, because it was necessary in the perfect government of God. Also, God foresaw its good effect; and therefore, in all truth and sincerity, it was put forth. "God knows that His believing children will persevere unto the end: why, then, does He speak to them as if they might not—as if they might apostatize and drawback unto perdition?" The answer is, because they might. It is a clear possibility that they might; and very likely the realization by them of this awful possibility is *one* of the elements which compose and complete the certainty of perseverance unto the end.

III. The mind of God is the one perfect mirror reflecting without the least distortion or refraction, every object, act, state, being, in the universe, just as it is. God morally regards us at any one moment just as we are. If we repent of all sin and grow into all goodness, His thought and feeling will rise with us; and as, repenting, He spared Nineveh, so will He spare us, and we shall live and not die.

A. RALEIGH, *The Story of Jonah*, p. 241.

REFERENCES: iii. 10. to iv. 1.—J. Menzies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 117; W. G. Blaikie, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 297. iii.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 103. iv. 1-4.—W. G. Blaikie, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 356. iv. 2.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, 2nd series, p. 75.

Chap. iv., ver. 4 (with Ephesians iv., 26.)—"Doest thou well to angry?" "Be ye angry and sin not."

THE former text implies that there is an anger which is sinful; and the latter text implies that there is an anger which is not sinful. The difference lies not so much in the character, or even in the degree, of the emotion; but rather in the motive which rouses it and the object towards which it is directed.

I. There is a feeling to which we give the name of moral indignation; by way of distinguishing it from other kinds of anger, more or less selfish and self-asserting; moral indignation is characterized chiefly by this—that it is quite unselfish. It is the feeling which rises in the breast of a man when he reads of or looks upon the ill-treatment of an animal, or the deception of a child, or the insulting of a woman. To stand by and see these things without remonstrance or without interference, is not forbearance; it is a cowardice, it is an unmanliness, it is a sin.

II. There is place, again, and room for anger, not only in the

contemplation of wrong, but in the personal experience of temptation. There is an indignation, there is even a resentment, there is even a rage and fury, which may be employed, without offence to the Gospel, in repelling such an assault. Nor is that anger necessarily misplaced, because the lips of friendship or love are those which play the seducer. The tempter, like the bully, is a coward; the very eye undimmed by sinning will scare him off, like the rising sun of the Psalmist, to lay him down in his den.

III. Be angry with *yourself*, and sin not; let the time of this ignorance and folly and fatuity go at last and bury itself; awake to righteousness, and sin not; see if a moral indignation, powerful against others, may not beneficially be tried against yourself.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Temple Sermons*, 463.

Chap. iv., ver. 5.—"So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city."

I. JONAH sat in his booth, dark and moody—plunged into deep distress by the very things which brought relief and hope to the great city. The reasons for his displeasure were manifold. He was jealous, with a needless jealousy, for the honour of God. His own reputation as a prophet was touched. His country was in danger from the Assyrian power, which he had hoped was now to be utterly humbled and smitten. The course of Providence had seemed right to him, although dark, while justice had held the awful scales and looked at the glittering sword. But now when mercy—fairer form than justice—had sheathed the sword, and thrown vast forgiveness into the scale to outweigh all terrors and penalties, he sees, with jaundiced eye, the whole course of Providence running in a wrong direction. "The times are out of joint." Sorrows wait for him and his. Surely the Lord is not taking the best plan.

II. Then came the prayer. This verse shows us that his "displeasure" and "grief" were just such as come to men amid the reverses and thwartings of life. It was the sighing and fretting of a wounded spirit amid "things," but not the personal and conscious revolt of the soul against the living God. He prays that he may die. (i) There is a certain wild majesty in this desire from which we can hardly withhold the tribute of our admiration. He wanted to die there and then. This wounded spirit, realizing its immortality the more amid change and adversity, rises disdainfully above the

mortal pathway, above the whole round of earthly toil and care,—ambition and its reverses, honour and its shadows, joy and its close attendant grief,—beats its wings in the higher air, and asks to be liberated for the last flight, up into immortality and heaven. (ii) This prayer shows weakness as well as strength. There is in it, after all, something of a child's waywardness. "Things have gone all awry, and nothing can ever be right again. Let me get away from such a disjointed world."

III. We can hardly doubt that Jonah thought of Elijah in offering the selfsame prayer, and that, in his own mind, he justified the presentation of it by the force of so great an example. Thus "the evil that men do," even in their prayers, "lives after them." Great men, when they err, are great tempters. A prophet can beguile a prophet.

A. RALEIGH, *The Story of Jonah*, p. 252.

REFERENCE: iv. 5-11.—W. G. Blaikie, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 358.

Chap. iv., vers. 6-11.—"And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief," etc.

I. JONAH'S gourd was all but certainly the palm-Christ, so-called because it is a five-leaved plant, one leaf of which outspread resembles a man's hand. It was thought to represent the hand of Christ. This plant is indigenous in nearly all the Eastern countries. It grows to the height of eight, ten, twelve feet. It has but one leaf for a branch, but the branches are numerous, and the leaves are broad. Branch rising above branch, nothing could be better adapted for making a screen and casting a relieving shadow. It was a quickly growing plant, which sprang up during the forty days, and was ready with its shade for the prophet's time of need. By a poetic figure it is called, in the tenth verse, "the son of the night."

II. Why was Jonah so exceeding glad of the gourd? (i) Partly, no doubt, for the simplest and most obvious reason—because it was an immense physical relief and protection. (ii) The gourd was a gift from God to the prophet, and accepted by him as such. He sat there under its shadow with great delight. (iii) He would probably take it as a Divine indication that he had done right in waiting to see what would become of the city.

III. It is impossible to help "moralizing," as some would call it, on the worm and the gourd. They are felt universally to be emblems too faithful of the swift-coursing, closely-linked joy and sorrow of this mortal life. (i) The fine plant, leafy green, types so well our comforts, successes, joys. (ii) The single day of shade it furnished the heated prophet speaks touchingly of the transiency of our pleasures. (iii) The worm reminds us that a small and mean creature may be a very formidable enemy. (iv) The place of its operation, under the soil, shows us how powers and agents, invisible and unknown to us, can touch and smite in secret the springs of outward prosperity. (v) The time when decay began—at the rising of the morning—makes us think mournfully how human helps and comforts often wither at the very season when they are most needed. (vi) The utter loss of what had given such intense enjoyment warns us not to set our affections passionately upon anything which can be utterly lost, but to lift our supreme affection to things above the sphere of the "worm," and the "moth," beyond the reach of the "rust," and the "thief." (vii) The Divine "preparation" of the destroying insect to feed upon the plant which had been as divinely prepared, sheds some light amid the darkest mysteries of life, and brings a strong relief and assuagement to us amid the natural fears and doubts of our experience. Destruction is prepared by God as well as life; trouble as well as joy. And both are divinely ruled, with a view to the education and purification of human souls.

A. RALEIGH, *The Story of Jonah*, p. 271.

Chap. iv., ver. 9.—"God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?"

I. THE first thing which strikes us in this portion of sacred history is Jonah's selfishness.

II. Another thing which strikes us unpleasantly in the history of Jonah is his ingratitude.

III. The withering of Jonah's gourd should remind us how shortlived our earthly comforts are.

IV. Very trifling causes blast our happiness, and rob us of our peace.

V. We are reminded, in Jonah's history, of God's abounding mercy.

J. N. NORTON, *Golden Truths*, p. 158.

REFERENCE: iv. 9.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 195.

Chap. iv., vers. 9-12.

NOTICE:—I. The sinfulness of absorbing passion. Its sinfulness is illustrated: (1) By Jonah's contempt of life. Nineveh was not to be destroyed as he had prophesied, and his pride was wounded, and he says: "Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live." A man's worth may be measured by the reverence he has for his life. It is well for Christians to be aware of the real impiety that lurks under a longing for death, and weariness of the life which, day by day, God is bestowing on us here. (2) The sinfulness of absorbing passion is seen again in that it works insincerity. Even after Jonah has recognised that God is sparing the city, he still affects to believe that it will be overthrown. (3) The selfishness of an absorbing passion is illustrated in Jonah's contempt of the men of Nineveh. He will not share in their repentance; he will not encourage their hope that God may yet turn away His fierce anger, nor join them in their gratitude that God has spared them. He shuts himself up alone to brood over his anger. All passion tends to arrogance. Self-absorption means scorn of our fellows. A single passion may arrogate to itself the whole sphere of life, constitute itself the be-all and end-all of existence.

II. God's cure for absorbing passion. God seeks to restore the prophet by awakening love in his heart; awakening his interest, and making him tender over the gourd. There is something wonderful in life, even though it be the life of a common weed. Such things speak to us, however faintly we may understand them, of an awful power that forms and an ever-watchful care that tends them; they are "fearfully and wonderfully made." The tenderness that was in Jonah, poor as it was, mingled with selfishness as it was, was yet, in its dim and partial way, an emblem of the tenderness of God for every creature He has made.

A. MACKENNAL, *Christ's Healing Touch*, p. 89.

Chap. iv., vers. 10, 11.—"Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow . . . and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city," etc.

THE Divine argument for mercy in these last verses is, if we may say so without irreverence, a masterpiece of Divine skill and simplicity. There are many single texts of the New Testament which express quite as strongly the unfailing readiness of the mercy of God to sinful men. But the beautiful pecu-

liarity of this passage is, that it is an actual instance of the exercise of that mercy.

I. See how simply the argument begins. As a lily was text enough for our Lord for a sermon on providence, so a gourd serves this occasion for a proclamation to all the world of mercy. "Thou hast had pity on the gourd."

II. It is not the life of the plant, but the feeling of the man about it, that constitutes the true symbol of the Divine love. "Thou hast had pity on the gourd." May not I have pity, too? It is much to have, thus, direct sanction given to the validity, rightness, of our instinctive feelings. Our natural pity, our sensibility, our sympathy with all life,—these are right and good. We are wrong as to our moral condition, but these are right.

III. It is an argument from the less to the greater. "How much more" seems to sound in these two last verses, and all through them. In every point there is contrast, clear and strong. (1) You had pity on a gourd. What is a plant to a human being? (2) The gourd was but one. Would you spare the one, and must I slay the many? (3) The contrast touches the quality of relative performance. (4) Jonah had not laboured for the gourd. God had waited for the coming of each soul, and laboured with all the energies and harmonies of His providence, that each might come in his own "fulness of time." (5) Another touch of God's thoughtful tenderness is the mention of the children. Many great and fruitful truths lie couchant here. It is manifest: (*a*) that infants are regarded by God as personally innocent; (*b*) that unconscious beings may have—really have—a great moral power and place in the universe; (*c*) that life is good. Better to live even in such a place as Nineveh, where alas! the wickedness is only arrested for a little, and not extinguished, than not to live at all.

(6) And also much cattle. The condescending God, stooping down to the children, sees, reaches far below them. But the cattle are far above the gourd. They, too, in their dumb, dull way, are suppliants. He who makes them feeds them, recognizes their right to be fed. He who owns "the cattle upon a thousand hills," has the thousand hills *for* the cattle as well as for the service of man.

A. RALEIGH, *The Story of Jonah*, p. 297.

REFERENCES: iv. 10, 11.—E. W. Shalders, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 168. iv. 11.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Ibid.*, vol. xv., pp. 369, 394.

MICAH:

Reference: 1. 12.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 336.

Chap. ii., ver. 1.—"Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand."

This verse introduces us to a reflection which it is very important that we should sometimes thoughtfully dwell on; that thought is, the responsibility of power, or the temptations peculiar to power.

I. Of all things in heaven and earth which the human heart craves for most vehemently, there is nothing that it longs for so intensely and unceasingly, as power. "To be weak, is to be miserable, doing and suffering," says our great poet. To be weak is to be always craving and never having; always yearning and never possessing. We flatter ourselves with the belief that we lack nothing but strength, to make us heroes; nothing but resources to make us higher than the angels, and like unto God. Something better than mere power is wanted to make a hero or an angel. If we be blessed with the gifts of power, and vigour, and force, we must reflect that we watch them wisely, lest what God meant should be a boon become in our case a bane.

II. Had these men of Israel, over whose heads a heavy doom was hanging, been men of the mob, poor and feeble, how different their thoughts on their beds might have been, in that they would then have lacked the power of gratification. No man meditates long upon the doing of what he is convinced at starting is an impossibility. And therefore, if we be wise, we shall give thanks to God at times for weakness, as well as for strength, for failures as well as successes, for the difficulties that meet us day by day, as well as for our many helps and supporters. We shall thank God that we have been *found out* in many an unworthy act, and not suffered to go on in it, and that we have been put to shame

in the course of many a wicked plan, and stopped ere we could quite accomplish it; and have been held back from the doing of many a shameful deed which we had devised upon our beds, and were only restrained from practising, because it was not in the power of our hands.

A. JESSOPP, *Norwich School Sermons*, p. 11.

Chap. ii., ver. 7.—"O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? are these His doings?"

I. CONSIDER the promise of the Pentecost. There was (i) the promise of a Divine Spirit by symbols which express some, at all events, of the characteristics and wonderfulness of His work. The "rushing of a mighty wind" spoke of a power which varies in its manifestations, from the gentlest breath that scarce moves the leaves on the summer trees to the wildest blast that casts down all which stands in its way. The twin symbol of the fiery tongues which parted and sat upon each of them speaks in like manner of the Divine influence, not as destructive, but full of quick, rejoicing energy and life, the power to transform and to purify. (ii) There is, further, in the fact of Pentecost the promise of a Divine Spirit which is to influence the *moral* side of humanity. (iii) The Pentecost carried in it the promise and prophecy of a Spirit granted to all the Church. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost." (iv) The promise of the early history was that of a Spirit which should fill the whole nature of the men to whom He was granted; filling them in the measure of their receptivity, as the great sea does all the creeks and indentations along the shore.

II. Look at the apparent failure of the promise. "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" Look at Christendom. Will anyone say that the religious condition of any body of professed believers at this moment corresponds to Pentecost? Is not the gap so wide that to fill it up seems almost impossible? (i) Does the ordinary tenour of our own religious life look as if we had that Divine Spirit in us which transforms everything into its own beauty? (ii) Do the relations of modern Christians and their churches to one another attest the presence of a unifying Spirit? (iii) Look at the comparative impotence of the Church in its conflict with the growing worldliness of the world. "If God be with us, why has all this come upon us?"

III. Think for a moment of the solution of the contradiction.

It is our own fault and the result of evil in ourselves that may be remedied, that we have so little of the Divine gift. The same fulness of the Spirit which filled the believers on the day of Pentecost, is available for us all. "Ask, and ye shall receive," and be filled with the Holy Ghost, and with power.

A. MACLAREN, *Christ in the Heart*, p. 305.

REFERENCES: ii. 7.—J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 65. ii. 8.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 339. ii. 10.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 38; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 33. ii. 13.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 237.

Chap. ii., ver. 13.—"The Breaker is come up before them."

THE title of the "Breaker" was most appropriately given to the Lord Jesus, (i) because it was through His agency alone that the power of sin was broken; (ii) because, by His death, the distinction between Jews and Gentiles was for ever removed; (iii) because, by His death He destroyed death, and by His triumphant resurrection He has given an earnest of what He will one day accomplish for all who sleep in Him.

J. N. NORTON, *Every Sunday*, p. 11.

Chap. iv., ver. 5.—"For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever."

A VERY peculiar use is made of missions in our text. The heathen are surveyed, not as abandoning their falsehood and superstition, but as adhering to them with the greatest earnestness and tenacity. False gods they have, but they refuse to forsake them; dark and oppressive is their service, but they will not abandon it. And from this steadfastness of the heathen the argument is drawn for making the resolve, "and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever," as though it had been urged: If the pagan adhere to what is false, shall we forsake what is true? If he serve his idols with constancy, inexcusable must we be if we turn aside from the Lord our God.

I. What the missionary ascertains is, not that idolaters refuse to add to the number of their idols, but only that they will not exchange their idols. If they admit new, they nevertheless adhere to the old. Shall the pagan adhere to his idols, because they were the idols of his fathers?—and shall we virtually revolt from that God whom our ancestors served, and whose truth, though at the cost of substance and life, they

handed down to us as the most precious possession? Shall the pagan hold that his idols are the tutelary deities of the land, and therefore not to be forsaken; and shall we turn away from that Almighty Being, who hath mercifully spread over our land the shield of His protection, or kept us within the hollow of His hand.

II. Far-off islands preach to us. The vast districts of the earth, which are yet darkened by superstition, assume the office of counsellors. Cities where the Cross of Christ has no place; mountains whose summits are yet altars to the stars, forests whose recesses shroud lying vanities; rivers whose waters are thought to wash away sin,—all these combine to give forth an utterance which chides the wavering, rebukes the unstable, and warns the indifferent. The heathen are not to be persuaded to forsake what is cruel, and oppressive, and galling; whereas we scarcely need persuasion to induce us to forsake what "hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." They observe with all vigour what is stern and revolting, and we too often treat with all carelessness what is as gracious as it is glorious. Let us take a lesson from idolatry, and be shamed by it into zeal for our religion and faithfulness to our God. There are other spectators of our course besides angels, other witnesses than the noble army of martyrs. The millions of China look on; the untold tribes of Africa take the post of observation; the broad Pacific bears upon its bosom a multitude of watchers, and if we fall away from the faith, a cry shall be heard from heathen lands, a cry against which there will be no appeal.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,704.

REFERENCES: iv. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 249. iv. 2.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvi., p. 222. iv. 3, 4.—G. Carlyle, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 213. iv. 9.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 13. v. 1.—G. Lewis, *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. i., p. 318. v. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 57; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 58; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 328. v. 4.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 560; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 232. v. 4, 5.—Archbishop Benson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 225. v. 6-8.—*Pulpit Analyst*, vol. iii., p. 652. v. 7.—W. Lindsay Alexander, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 248. vi. 2.—R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 112. vi. 2, 3.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvii., p. 225. vi. 3.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 342; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 167; R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 103. vi 3-8.—A. P. Stanley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 289; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 299. vi. 6, 7.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 50.

Chap vi., ver. 6-8.—"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" etc.

MANY and various, in all ages, have been the answers to this question, but in spirit and principle they reduce themselves to the three which in these verses are tacitly rejected, that the fourth may be established for all time.

I. The first answer is, Will Levitical sacrifices suffice? "Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?"—*i.e.* "Shall I do some outward act or acts to please God?" Men are ever tempted to believe in this virtue of doing something—to ask, as they often asked our Lord, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" There have been attempts in all ages to revive such ceremonials as the Levitical institutes, because they are easier than true holiness, and tend to pacify and appease the perverted conscience. But God's own Word about them is plain: they perish in the using, they cannot sanctify to the purifying of the flesh.

II. If, then, we cannot please God by merely doing, can we by giving? "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil?" Surely not one of us is so exquisitely foolish as to imagine that he can by gifts win his way one step nearer to the great white throne.

III. What third experiment shall we try? Shall it be by suffering? Shall I, lacerating my heart in its tenderest affection, "give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Has any man ever found these sufferings sufficient? Has any man ever testified that he found forgiveness through voluntary torture? Or is not that true which is said of the prophets of Baal: "They leaped upon the altar, and cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner, and it came to pass that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded."

IV. What, then, is the true way of pleasing God? What is the prophet's answer? By *being*. By being just and merciful, and humble before our God. It is the answer of all the prophets, it is the answer of all the Apostles, it is the answer of Christ Himself. God needs not our services, He needs not our gifts, least of all does He need our suffering; but He needs us,—our hearts, our lives, our love.

F. W. FARRAR, *Silence and Voices of God*, p. 71.

REFERENCES: vi. 6-8.—J. Vaughan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 237; *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 274; A. Watson, *Good Words*, 1872, p. 131; C. Kingsley, *Sermons for the Times*, p. 93.

Chap. vi., ver. 8.—"What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

MORALITY and Religion.

I. Morality is good in itself, but when inspired with religious faith and love it becomes better still; then it unites what is fairest on earth with what is most glorious in heaven. Not only does religion add a new and higher beauty to virtue, it is sometimes the only secure defence against temptation to vice and crime. Human weakness, when unsustained by the fear of God, the love of Christ, and the power of the Holy Ghost, is very likely to be mastered by the world, the flesh, and the devil; and there is not a man amongst us who should dare to say: "Let temptation do its worst, and whether God helps me or not I am strong enough to stand against it." There are hundreds who need the resoluteness of heroic strength, and almost a martyr's constancy, to preserve the commonest human virtues.

II. But while I maintain that religion is the best friend to morality instead of its rival or its foe, I am far from thinking that the Christian Church in our own times is doing all it might for the morals of its own members and for the morals of society at large. I believe that a defective and erroneous theology has enfeebled the religious motives which should sustain and perfect common human virtues; that the discipline and cultivation of the moral character of Christian people is too much neglected, that an undue emphasis is laid upon the worth of religious emotion, and that the sacredness of the practical duties of life is depreciated. You fall into a ruinous mistake if you suppose that a solitary precept of the moral law was repealed, or its authority weakened, or its sanctions and penalties withdrawn, when you repented of sin and trusted in the mercy of God. Every common duty is a common duty still, whether you are a Christian or not; the neglect of it provokes the displeasure of God, and whether you are a Christian or not that displeasure will be manifested.

III. There is one pernicious principle which is acted upon by some sincere and earnest religious people in the cultivation of moral character which deserves a most serious refutation. They are anxious that all goodness should spring from one solitary motive. They desire that the thought of God should not only be the supreme but the only active power in the soul. He is, indeed, a happy man to whom the remembrance of God is ever present as a living and practical energy in the soul; but wherever that energy works freely, naturally, and vigorously,

it will not work alone. It will inspire us with a more fervent loyalty to truth and honesty, and with a deeper disgust for falsehood and injustice; it will reveal itself not only in the intensity of the spiritual affections, but in the strength and resoluteness of the moral principles.

R. W. DALE, *Discourses on Special Occasions*, p. 27.

I. THE Lord requires thee to "do justly." The whole ques- question of the ground of moral obligation is raised by this sentence. It seems to tell me that some one is commanding a certain course of action, which I am bound to follow because He commands it. And this course of action is described by the phrase "doing justly." Is justice, then, nothing in itself? Are actions made right because a certain power insists that they shall be performed? Did Micah believe that the Lord was a mere power, who commanded certain things to be left undone? If He did, He set at nought the law and history, which He confessed to be divine. That law and history declared that the I AM, the Righteous Being, had revealed Himself to the creatures whom He had formed in His image; and had said to them "Be ye holy, for I am holy." If you would have the command "do justly" in place of a weight of rules and observances and ceremonies, you must have justice set before you—not in words, formulas, decrees; but lovingly, personally, historically.

II. But the prophet says that the Lord requires of men to "love mercy." This is a higher obligation, still harder to fulfil. Mercy is no doubt a beautiful quality; all religions confess it to be so. When it comes forth in life, men generally are disposed to pay it a frank, unquestioning homage. But there is a limit to this admiration. If mercy meets an unmerciful habit of mind in us, its works will be explained away. Neither priest nor philosopher can teach us how we may both do justly and love mercy. Believe that the Spirit of mercy and forgiveness does, indeed, proceed from the Father and the Son, and you see how that very forgiveness which is shown to man becomes a principle in him able to overcome his unforgiving nature, able to go out in acts of forbearance and gentleness.

III. The Lord requires man to "walk humbly with Him." We are humble in ourselves only when we are walking with God, when we are remembering that we are in His presence, that He is going with us where we go, and staying with us where we stay. It is this thought which lays a man in the

dust, for then His eyes are upon him in whose sight the angels are not clean. It is this which raises him to a height he had never dreamt of, for the Lord God has been mindful of him, and come near to him, and fitted him for converse with Himself.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 279.

I. A GREAT deal is required of man, when it is required, amongst other things, that he "walk humbly with his God." We conclude from the singular favour shown to Enoch, that though every converted man is "at peace with God," it may be only of those who love Him with a more than common affection, and serve Him with a special consecration of every power that we can really declare that they "walk with God." (1) Walking humbly with God indicates an habitual sense of His presence a nearness to God, a communion with God; not merely a consequence on the fact that "God is about our path and about our bed, and spieth out all our ways;" but consequent on the practical belief of this fact, on its being realised as a great truth —a truth gifted with an influence over the whole range of our conduct. (2) Walking with God denotes a complete fixing of the affections on things above. It is the description of a man, who, while yet in the flesh, might be said to have both his head and his heart in heaven. He lives in the very atmosphere of the invisible world, holding communion with its mysterious and glorious inhabitants, and finding his great delight in anticipating its enjoyments.

II. Consider the strangeness of the expression of the text: What doth the Lord require of thee but—this or that? This must excite some surprise if it be not shown that more could have been asked; but it quite removes the appearance of strangeness from the expression to consider that man gives little in giving all; and that what is now demanded of him is as nothing when compared with what God might have asked from His creatures. (1) We may safely affirm of the Divine commandments that man is sure to procure himself happiness or unhappiness, according as he does or does not readily conform to them. And if man's own interests are deeply involved in his yielding himself up to the service of God we may readily understand why, when giving all, we should only be reckoned as giving little. (2) God requires of us literally nothing in comparison with what He might have required. He might have left us to struggle in the dark; He might have hidden from us all the

shining of His favour; He might have left us wounded, and given no balsam for the wound; He might have inclosed us in a prison, and left no lattice for the sunbeams. It is only needful that we remember that the fear and love which God demands from us make our pilgrimage pleasant, whereas He might have excited horror and dread which would have made that pilgrimage appalling. It is only needful to compare what God actually requires with what He might have required, and the heart must be cold which does not thankfully confess that He requires but little.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,125.

REFERENCES: vi. 8.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. x., p. 1; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1,557; R. Balgarnie, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 322; A. Rowland, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxi., p. 266; S. Cox, *Expositions*, 3rd series, p. 70. vi. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 155; G. D. Macgregor, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 392. vii. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 945; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 189.

Chap. vii., ver. 3.—"With both hands earnestly."

I. "WITHOUT hands." There are some good men who seem to be without hands altogether. From dawn of life until dusk they do nothing expressly for Christ. All the day passes thus in idleness with them. As to work: they could work with hands, because they do, in other things. But as soon as they come to any expressly Christian work both hands drop down, and there they stand—without hands.

II. "With one hand." This is the second state. For so, many of God's servants serve Him. And this is well when it is just at the beginning of the service. Let all the one-handed ones hear the "God speed" of the older workers. If the older hands in a manufactory, the men of skill and ready hand, were to come and look over the work of the apprentices in a mocking spirit, or even with an air of proud superiority, these young learners might feel justly aggrieved. But if these men come as instructed by the master; and, looking over the work in a spirit of kindliness, point out its deficiencies, and see how they can be remedied and supplied, will there be any cause of grievance then? If they say: "With both hands you must work, and watch with both eyes, if you wish to become prime and perfect workmen"—would not this be the greatest kindness to the young workers? Now this is just what we say to all learners in progress—in short, to all one-handed men, we say—

III. "With both hands." For after all there is no perfection, even of a relative kind, with one. And the continued use of only one is a shocking imperfection in the Christian service. For as both hands have been given for use, the other will not be idle. It will be working in forbidden ways. It will be grasping the world. Work "with both hands" for very safety.

There is yet, however, a higher stage of obedience, the highest of all, which is expressed by all the words of the text "with both hands *earnestly*." It is not enough that all the talents are laid out; they must be laid out to the best advantage. It is not enough that every power and passion shall be enlisted in the Lord's service; they must all be baptized, inspired, and energized with a Christian's earnestness. (1) Self-preservation requires an earnest life. (2) Honesty requires it. (3) Benevolence requires it. (4) Gratitude requires it. (5) Time requires it.

A. RALEIGH, *Quiet Resting Places*, p. 299.

REFERENCES: vii. 3.—J. G. Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 97. vii. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1,819; W. Jay, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 175.

Chap. vii., vers. 8, 9.—"Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him."

I. MEN commonly think a sin to be cancelled when it is done and over; or, in other words, that amendment is an expiation. They do not take the trouble to repent. Regret, vexation, sorrow,—such feelings seem to this busy, practical, unspiritual generation as idle; as something despicable and unmanly, just as tears may be. They *are* unbelieving, they *are* irrational, if they are nothing more than remorse, gloom, and despondency. Such is "the sorrow of the world," which "worketh death." Yet there is a "godly sorrow" also; a positive sorrowing for sin, and a deprecation of its consequences, and that quite distinct from faith or amendment; and this, so far from being a barren sorrow, worketh, as the Apostle assures us, "repentance to salvation, not to be repented of."

II. When Christians have gone wrong in any way, whether in belief or in practice, scandalously or secretly, it seems that pardon is not explicitly, definitely, promised them in Scripture as a matter of course; and the mere fact that they afterwards become better men, and are restored to God's favour, does not decide the question whether they are in every sense pardoned;

for David was restored, and yet was afterwards punished. It is still a question whether a debt is not standing against them for their past sins, and is not now operating, or to operate, to their disadvantage. What the payment consists in, and how it will be exacted, is quite another question, and a hidden one. God may spare us, He may punish. In either case, however, our duty is to surrender ourselves into His hands, that He may do what He will.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 94.

REFERENCES: vii. 8.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 32; J. Keble, *Sermons from Easter to Ascension Day*, p. 220. vii. 9.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 210; J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 145. vii. 18.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 259; H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 1870, p. 489. vii. 18-20.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 169. vii. 19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1,577.

NAHUM.

Chap. i., vers. 2.—"God is jealous."

I. There are many terms applied to God in Scripture, which seem to anthropomorphize His character: The "angry" God; the "repenting" God; the "foreseeing" God. Now, whenever such terms are used, think of them as steps of Divine descent. Through those words, as down a stairway, Divine Majesty descends to us, and infinite relations make themselves known. "Jealous" is the same word as zealous, and both are derived from the Greek word ζῆλος, fire. Zeal is enthusiasm, moral fire; and jealousy—what is jealousy, but love on fire? And is not this the representation we constantly have of God? And is it possible that to us He could be what He is—love—if it were not so? Jealousy is love on fire, and the jealousy of God is love on fire.

II. From our most innocent down to our most corrupt affections, there is danger that in them, in our haste, we forget God. If you love unwisely and vehemently, whatever it may be, you must accept the consequences as a proof of Divine jealousy. God is jealous of sin; and being jealous of sin, He is jealous of all aberrations from Himself. He is jealous of love, of power, of knowledge. See how He is constantly reminding man of his weakness, as He incarnates his strength. And God is constantly absorbing man's knowledge, love, and power to Himself.

III. We feel that there is no love where there is no fire; but let it burn with the white, not with the red, heat. Christ was love on fire. God so loved the world that He gave Him. The Cross illustrates the jealousy of God.

E. Paxton Hood, *Dark Sayings on a Harp*, p. 111.

Reference: i. 2.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 256.

Chap. i., ver. 3.—"The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet."

The text presents us with two great subjects of meditation: the admirable patience of the Divine Being, and the mysterious and awful character of His providential operations.

I. We believe, from the structure of the passage, that it was the Divine patience which the prophet desired to exhibit, and that he added a reference to the power of God, and His punishment of the wicked, in order to guard men against presuming on His forbearance.

The Divine patience is evidently a property which could not be displayed unless there was sin. There was abundant evidence of the Divine goodness before man transgressed; but none of the Divine patience. When our race rebelled, Divine patience instantly displayed itself. Men were not immediately punished; but, on the contrary, were allowed opportunities of repentance, so that it was evident that vengeance might be deferred, yea, finally averted, and that God was a Being who could restrain His anger, and receive back to favour the creatures by whom He had been provoked. We may safely affirm that the reason why long-suffering was exhibited in the instance of men, though not in that of angels, was that Christ had undertaken to be the surety of human kind, and that, therefore, repentance and forgiveness were possible in the case of the posterity of Adam.

II. Consider the remaining portion of the text, in which the prophet speaks of God in these sublime words: "The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet." God has everything at His disposal, and He accomplishes His purposes, and works out the counsel of His own will, through a varied instrumentality; not only through engines that seem worthy of being employed, but through others, that we might have thought unsuited to His ends; not only through the manifestations of gentleness and benevolence, but through the terrors of the hurricane; whether the hurricane that sweeps the firmament, or the far fiercer and sterner of human rebellion. It ought to come home to us as a beautiful truth that it is not in the calm of the sunshine, or in the pleasant breeze, that the Lord is said to have His way, but in those furious ebullitions, those tremendous concussions, which spread terror and ruin far and wide. It may have been

a wild tempest which hath swept over you, casting down what you had been long in rearing, and blighting what you have long fondly cherished; but the Lord hath His way in that tempest. It could not have raged without His permission, and He gave that permission because He loved you and wished to do you good.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit.* No. 317.

REFERENCES: i. 3.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 137; vol. i., No. 36; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 53; *Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 113. i. 7.—*Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 345. i. 10.—G. W. McCree, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 157.

HABAKKUK.

REFERENCES: i. 8.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 256. i. 12.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 46.

Chap. i., ver. 13.—"Thou art of purer eye than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity."

THE absolute holiness of God is a truth of both natural and revealed religion. We could not worship one who was not supremely holy. Every reason we have for believing in God at all is a reason for attributing this character to Him. The words of our text are an appeal to God on the ground of His holiness; an appeal to Him to explain what seemed inconsistent with this. It is the old, old problem. Why does God tolerate the existence, even permit the triumph, of the wicked? The holiness of His personal character must be offended at them; the righteousness of His rule demands their exposure and defeat; and yet again and again we see them prosperous. The results which are brought by the rule of God in a mingled world, where sin is allowed to display itself, are just the ends which a Holy Being would delight to secure.

I. Consider the imperfect holiness of good men. It cannot be said of any one of us that we are of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Some evils we cannot bear to see; but there are others of which we are very tolerant. There are few ways of bringing the evil of sin home to us more effective than making us see sin in others, and feel the bitterness of sin at the hands of others. The ungodly Jews were to learn, by the invasion of the still more ungodly Chaldeans, what a hateful thing ungodliness really was.

II. Consider the partiality of our appeals to the holiness of God. Personal antipathy wonderfully sharpens our sense of wickedness, and personal liking equally dulls our apprehension of the Divine judgment. God is wholly free from this disturbing partiality. What seems to us tolerance of evil, or indifference

towards us, is often but the patience of wisdom working for ends which our partiality will not let us see.

III. The Divine method of rebuking evil is another thing to be considered. His method is to let wickedness expose and punish itself; and this it is sure ultimately to do.

IV. We have not a true conception of the holiness of God when we view it as impulsive merely; it bears the sight of evil in confidence of overcoming it. To overcome evil, and turn it into penitence and faith and love, is the object of Him who is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity, when He endures the contradiction of sinners against Himself, and holds His peace in presence of unrighteousness.

A. MACKENNAL, *Sermons from a Sick Room*, p. 29.

Chap. i., ver. 16.—"Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous."

THE word "drag" simply means a large fishing-net. The bold metaphor of the text is that of a fisherman whose mind is so overborne by the large draughts of fish which he is continually taking, that he begins actually to worship those nets which are the instruments of such wonderful success.

I. The sin of man keeps repeating itself throughout the ages. Notwithstanding all the lessons of the past, there are still multitudes who forget the living God. They are not at all anxious to be doers of the right; but they are anxious that "their portion be fat, their meat plenteous." And when they are successful, they are puffed up with pride. They glory in their own skill and power. "They sacrifice to their net, and burn incense to their drag."

II. "What have we that we have not received?" Our very existence is itself a boon from God, and all our faculties and blessings are gifts of His bounty. The highest blessings for man are not material, but spiritual—not the fat portion and the plenteous meat, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is for want of grasping these two simple, cardinal truths that men so often fall into the worship of the net. Rank, wealth, intellect, business, such are some of the nets men worship. But God is not mocked, and in many ways He breaks men's idols before their very eyes. Let us take God's gifts with humble gratitude; let us use the powers which He has given us, not for our own aggrandisement, but for His glory; and instead of casting forth our net merely to enrich

ourselves out of others, let us seek to become, in the good, true sense of the word, "fishers of men."

T. CAMPBELL FINLAYSON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 168.

REFERENCE: i. 16.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 170.

Chap. ii., ver. 1.—**"I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved."**

I. THE prophet Habakkuk defines for us what the position of that man's mind must be, who would catch the deep, still messages of which everything is full—what it is to be waiting for heavenly signs. (1) There must be an individuality and solitude; you must be, and feel, alone with God. (2) You must be found in your own proper duty, whatever it be, and in that duty faithful. (3) You must carry on your watch at a high level of thought. (4) In the watch, and on the tower, you must be patient. (5) There must be a confident anticipation that something is coming, that God is going to speak, and that God will speak.

II. There are some occasions on which we should especially wait, and when we may so calculate with an entire confidence on the speaking of God that those passages of life ought to be singled out. (1) One is, after prayer. How many answers have been missed, simply because we did not follow our petitions with a heavenward eye, and with the calm waitings of expectant faith! Remember, when you pray, go at once from the footstool to the tower. (2) Another time when we should watch well to see what God will say unto us is just before we are entering upon any important duty, or work done for God, or undertaking any enterprise. (3) Afflictions are the seasons for very earnest listenings. Depend upon it, whenever a cloud rolls over you, there is a voice in that cloud.

III. Whatever else there may be in the voice, long listened for, when it comes there will certainly be three things. God will comfort you; God will stimulate you; God will reprove you. He will comfort you that you are His child. He will stimulate you to do a child's work. And He will reprove you, because it is a child's portion at a faithful Father's hand.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 6th series, p. 109.

REFERENCES: ii. 1-4.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 348. ii. 2.—J. P. Chown, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 275.

Chap. ii., ver. 3.—"Wait."

THE word "wait" is the one word which the Divine wisdom often seems to utter, in rebuke of human impatience. God is never in haste. In Holy Scripture men are often counselled to wait, to wait upon God, to wait for God; language which supposes delay and the need of patience.

I. (1) The history of the earth is illustrative of the principle now suggested. (2) There is something in the movement of the seasons tending to remind us of this great law. (3) There is something in the history of all life adapted to convey the same lesson.

II. Revealed religion contains much in harmony with these facts in nature and providence. (1) We see a fact of this nature in the long interval which was to pass between the promise of a Saviour and His advent. (2) When the Saviour did come, the manner of His coming was not such as the thoughts of men would have anticipated. (3) Nor is it without mystery to many minds that the history of revealed religion since the advent should have been such as it has been. (4) The law of waiting is seen in the spiritual history of the individual believer. (5) So is it with the events which make up the story of a life. We have to wait—it may be to wait long—before we see the Divine purpose in the things which befall us. Experience should check impatience, should teach us how to wait.

R. VAUGHAN, *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. iii., p. 1.

REFERENCES: ii. 3.—M. Dix, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, p. 14; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 266.

Chap. ii., ver. 3, 4.—"For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry," etc.

A LARGE space of the Church's history, and of every believer's experience, is occupied by waiting. The whole of the Old Testament was a waiting for one dispensation. The whole of the New is waiting for another. David speaks of his waiting for God more than twenty-five times. Isaiah is full of the same thought. And every child of God could have much to tell of it. The reason is evident. It exercises faith. It humbles the soul. It enhances the blessing. It glorifies God. Therefore God waits, and therefore we must tarry His leisure.

I. We understand by the word "vision" something which we do not yet fully see, but which God will show us. It is a

familiar thought to us all to wait for the advent of Jesus Christ. The whole Church stands always in the attitude of expectation for the return of her Lord. But very few think of waiting for the advent of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes—goes—His advents are not one, but many. These comings are in very various degrees of power, and light, and influence. Observe St. Peter's remarkable expression: "When the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

II. Why does the vision tarry? I answer, partly, sovereignty; partly, your want of preparation; partly, discipline—but all love. It tarries behind your blind, hasty, impetuous rush; but it does not tarry behind God's calm, wise, pre-ordaining counsel.

III. How shall we wait? Just as the Apostles did. In holy places and ancient ordinances; in unity among ourselves; loving and praying; grasping the promises with submitted will; in the joy of confidence, though the God of our future, though the future of our God, be hidden; in the simplicities of faith and with loving views of Jesus.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 9th series, p. 229.

I. WE know that these words are spoken especially of the last coming of Christ; for St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, thus introduces this passage: "Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." And then the Apostle proceeds to add, from the next verse of the prophet, "Now the just shall live by faith." The passage sets before us, in a lively and striking manner, our whole condition in this world as a waiting for a judgment of the great day, and the temper of mind with which we are to await it. Let us look upon it as a warning and invitation to us to set aside all disguises and deceits, and to look steadfastly in the face the great, real, and abiding Truth; even as they who wait for the dawning day, and because they can behold no streak of light, look again and again, and, on account of their own impatience, think that the sun is long in rising, while at the same time it is ever approaching and will burst forth in its own appointed time; and they will wonder that their short time of waiting could have appeared so long.

II. The vision will come in its appointed time, and will not tarry; and in the meanwhile "the soul of him that is puffed up is not upright." More prayer, more solitude, more looking into the account of our souls, more humiliation before God—in these

we are to grow daily, in order that we may be prepared for the vision of God.

And for this reason we have to cast aside everything that tends to deceive, and to lead us to form a wrong estimate of ourselves. When we look back in the truth of God, behind us we see the Cross of Christ, teaching us humiliation; and when we look forward before us we see the tribunal and judgment seat of Christ, teaching us humiliation. Whenever anyone is lifted up with pride, there is a want of faithfulness in him; and this the day of trial will show; that day of visitation which is the forerunner of the great day of God. Waiting with humility, waiting with patience, waiting for God—this is the state of the Christian.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. x., p. 11.

Chap. ii., ver. 4.—"Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith."

THIS is one of those texts of which there are so many in the Bible, which, though they were spoken originally to one particular man, yet are meant for every man. They are world-wide and world-old. They are the law by which all goodness and strength and safety stand either in men or angels, for it always was true, and always must be true, that if reasonable beings are to live at all, it is by faith.

I. Think of the infinite power of God, and then think how is it possible to live except by faith in Him—by trusting to Him utterly. He made us; He gave us our bodies; He gave us our life; what we do He lets us do; what we say He lets us say—we all live on sufferance. If we are mere creatures of God, if God alone has every blessing both of this world and the next, and the will to give them away, whom are we to go to but to Him for all we want? It is so in the life of our bodies and in the life of our spirits. By trusting in Him, and acknowledging Him in every thought and action of our lives we shall be safe; for it is written: "The just shall live by faith."

II. This is not a doctrine which ought to make us despise men; any doctrine that *does*, does not come of God. When the Bible tells us that we can do nothing of ourselves, but can live only by faith, the Bible puts the highest honour upon us that any created thing can have. What are the things which cannot live by faith? The trees and plants, the beasts and birds, which, though they live and grow by God's providence, yet do

not know it, do not thank Him, cannot ask Him for more strength and life, as we can. It is only reasonable beings like men and angels, with immortal spirits in them, who *can* live by faith, and it is the greatest glory and honour to us that we can do so. Instead of being ashamed of being able to do nothing for ourselves, we ought to rejoice at having God for our Father and our Friend, to enable us to do all things through Him who strengthens us to do whatever is noble and loving, and worthy of true men. C. KINGSLEY, *Village Sermons*, p. 34.

I. WHEN this world has done its best and its worst, it will plainly appear that the great question between it and the Church is, whether it is better to trust in one's self—one's own wisdom and fame, and riches, and high spirit—or to go altogether out of one's self and to live entirely by faith upon the heavenly righteousness which God gives to His own people. The world rests upon itself, the Church lives by faith. The last day will show to all God's creation, as even man's death will show to him and convince him for ever, which is the right of these two and which is the wrong. It is the great concern of us all to make up our minds to this in good time, to make it the very rule of our life, that when the shadows of this world pass away, we may not depart helpless and unprepared into that other world where are no shadows at all; but dying with Christ's mark on us, and with our hearts full of Him, may both be acknowledged by Him whom we shall there meet face to face, and may ourselves know Him even as we are known.

II. The faith which keeps hold of our Lord, not only as bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, but also as uniting us to Himself and making us members of Him, strong in the strength of His Spirit to keep all we have vowed to Him—such faith as this leads immediately to the obeying of all His commandments; not one or two which may happen to come easiest to us, but all.

III. If our faith really tell us that we are in very deed brought so near to God in Christ as the New Testament everywhere implies, how certain must we feel, on the one hand, that none of our labour can be in vain in the Lord, that He counts and treasures up every one of our good thoughts, and actions, and self-denials; and on the other, that every wilful sin must tell for the worse upon our spiritual condition; it may be truly repented of, confessed, forsaken, but there is reason to fear that it never may nor can so vanish as if it had never been.

IV. Faith in Christ Jesus, just in proportion as it makes our actions important, will make our fortunes in this world of small consequence, because this thought will ever be in our minds—God has put us on our way to heaven, Christ is abiding in us by His Spirit to help us thither; what real difference can it make how we fare and how we are employed in the worldly matters through which we must pass here? How we behave, how we think and feel, what our hearts are set upon—*that* makes the difference, not how well we are provided for in this world.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. viii., p. 236.

REFERENCES: ii. 4.—J. Keble, *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p. 428; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1749; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, pp. 351, 354; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xvii., p. 227; T. Hammond, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 246; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 185; S. Martin, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 4th series, No. 10. ii. 11.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 286.

Chap. ii., ver. 20.—**"But the Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him."**

THE mystery of the Holy Trinity.

I. The Holy Trinity is the foundation-stone of our faith. All religious truth is little more than the expansion of the Trinity. The Trinity, as a fact, is beyond all controversy. It is shadowed out in nature—in leaves, flowers, and many creatures. It strangely pervades Providence. It has its counterpart in the triple composition and the wonderful structure of man. It has revealed itself in sacred histories, when the Three Persons have been pleased to show themselves distinct and yet simultaneous, as in the baptism of Jesus. But there are chains of thought as regards the Trinity—which we cannot, must not, enter—dark and awful! We can only wait outside the porch of the house and say adoringly: "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him."

II. The expression, "in His holy temple," seems to describe very exactly and beautifully how it is. Within the three courts of the Temple at Jerusalem stood the actual Temple, properly so called. It also had its three parts, and in its innermost part, the Holy of Holies, was the Shekinah—a light always shining over the mercy seat and the ark. No one ever saw it except the High Priest once a year. Between the people and the Holy Place was a curtain, which no one might even dare to touch.

Nevertheless, though they might not look on it, every Jew knew that that mysterious light day and night was there, the token and pledge of God's unchanging presence; and this knowing it was there was his confidence and his joy. It was to him matter of faith only, but as true to him as if he saw it. Just so it seems to be God's law that it should be with all grand truths. There are circles within circles, shrines within shrines. Into many we may safely go, we are bound to go; and in these is all we really need for each day's higher life. There we know God, we meet God, we converse with God, we enjoy God. But within it there is a secret place where no foot may tread. Reason cannot follow there. Woe to the man who curiously pries into its boundaries! The secret is—The Lord, the Lord alone! It is the region of pure trust. But then, I know a light I cannot look on is always burning, and to be conscious that there is that hidden lustre of rays, too dazzling for human eyes, is always doing good. It is always something beyond and above me, to lift me up. It exercises me, it humiliates me, it carries on my thoughts into the eternal. I know it is there, and I know that it is mine. J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 8th series, p. 223.

REFERENCES: ii. 20.—J. Davis, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 81; *Pulpit Analyst*, vol. v., p. 412.

Chap. iii., ver. 2.—**"O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known."**

I. THE first part of the prayer is, that God would revive His work. (1) God's working is the great subject of man's study, that on which man depends, and that which conditions all man's work. (2) God waits on man's working. He initiates, and yet He waits on account of the sin and sloth and heedlessness of man, God's work seems to decline, and God seems to withdraw. It is here that the place for revival is found. (3) What a force there is in the expression when we get down to its simple meaning: Make thy work to live; put power into thy work. How often has the work seemed to have everything but life. Life comes and all is changed. Men feel that God is working. There is a sense of God's glory. There is a restlessness, and yet a deep peace, and a strong and invincible hope that truth and God shall win the day. (4) The prayer is also that God would *make known*,—that He would not only work but reveal, not only impart energy but give those wide and clear views of truth which are the food of energy and its guide.

II. Let us inquire what weight, direction, and colouring are given to the prayer by the phrase attached to both petitions—"in the midst of the years." It is evident that there is an argument or plea in the words. (1) Is there an argument in the thought that many years are gone beyond recall, and that so many years fewer are to come? (2) The midst of the years seems suggestive of the confusion and darkness of time. (3) The words speak of calamity and loss characterizing the years outwardly, but more than counterbalanced by the prosperity of God's work. (4) The fleetingness and evanescence of the years rise before us in contrast to the immutable and eternal permanence of the Divine life. (5) The monotony amid all the changefulness of life is suggested by the phrase. To break through this and escape into real change and freshness is the ever needful effort. A revival of God's work accomplishes this for us.

J. LECKIE, *Sermons Preached at Ibrox*, p. 258.

REFERENCES: iii. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 725; vol. xxv., No. 1474; J. N. Norton, *Every Sunday*, p. 129; J. F. Haynes, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 294; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 304.

Chap. iii., ver. 4.—"And His brightness was as the light; He had horns coming out of His hand: and there was the hiding of His power."

I. IN the realm of nature there are hidings of God's power. Though we might become acquainted with the whole created universe of God, we have not exhausted Him. We get lost in our thought of God, and discover afresh that the finite cannot know all the Infinite, and that we have, and must have, only glimpses of His ways and works. See all you can, and after every manifestation you will have to declare there was revelation, but there was the hiding of His power.

II. In revelations of spiritual truth there are hidings of God's power. Revelation, like all other things, has been progressive. There has been growth, education, steady and gradual unfolding of the nature and will of God to men But while much was given, how much was withheld! Are there not flesh revelations to come, through the power of the promised Teacher of the Church in every age? Have we exhausted the treasury so that the scribes of the kingdom can henceforth bring nothing out of it. The prayer, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth," will suit every life.

III. In His providence there are hidings of God's power,

He does not reveal all He has in store for us, or all that He intends us to be at any one moment, or even in successive periods of our history. "His mercies are new every morning, and fresh every evening," and so their beauty is not lessened, but awakens morning and evening our joy and thankfulness. We do not know for what we are now being prepared. God is educating and disciplining us by various processes. We can see His hand in our life to-day, but what He intends to bring out of it to-morrow, who can declare? In all human lives there is a hiding of His power, and we have to wait the clear unfolding of His wise and glorious purpose.

W. BRADEN, *Sermons*, p. 43.

REFERENCES iii. 4.—J. A. Smith, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p 235, J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 221 iii. 6.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 347.

Chap. iii., vers. 16.—"I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble."

WE know things which do tremble that they may rest. "I tremble that I may rest" say the magnet, the planet, the bird. So says the heart in its language, the soul in its sorrowings. I tremble that I may rest. "The text is not a melancholy and prophetic foreboding. It is a wise repression of a too vehement self-consciousness,—the assurance that our labour is not guaranteed by our present exuberance, but by a wise and thoughtful fear.

I. The principle of fear is excited by the sense of God. Job said: "When I consider I am afraid of Him." When we think wisely and thoughtfully of God we may well tremble. It is the dictate of natural religion. When we look within, so as to know ourselves and what we are, when we meditate and revolve our own imperfectness and impurity, and the holy character of God—well may we say with Job: "When I consider I am afraid of Him."

II. Thus, then, there is a use in this trembling, which the Holy Spirit recognizes. We are often shaken by undefined terrors. There seems nothing to make us afraid; but the spirit is overwhelmed—all within us sinks. We are away from home; we are returning from a journey; we feel a weight upon the soul; surely it is the shadow of the invisible God passing by the spirit.

III. Rest is the issue of trembling. And is it not a great thing to rest in the day of trouble? He who can look death

in the face will start at no shadows. Although flesh and heart may faint, the soul rests; and thus, again, we have to say that holy fear is the guardian of the soul, the sentinel of the soul; and that, like an Erl-king, it bears us into real life, into a soothed life, a living and a living faith,—unhurt and unlost through the forest of life and its falling trees, and its perils and storms. A kingdom of peace is set up in the soul. Rest has followed on trembling. (1) Rest from the threatenings of the law; (2) rest from fear of punishment; (3) rest from the assaults of malignant spirits; (4) rest in the day of affliction and death. And perfect will the rest be when it is said: "The trembling is for ever over; thou hast trembled: now rest." While the dead planets may drift upon their way, and the melancholy and hectic ages roll, we shall be as God is, at rest only, sheltered for ever in the life of the resting Lamb.

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 45.

THE maxim contained in the words of the text may be thus briefly and simply expressed: "Fear, excited by the threatenings of God, issues in 'rest' followed by the mercies of God."

I. If we regard this maxim simply as a moral proverb, it will be susceptible of much powerful and practical illustration. We need only notice the tremendous distance which, in the estimate even of natural religion, separates us from God; we need only consider the greatness of the Creator's power, the fearful might of His uplifted arm, the sweeping torrent of His indignation, and all these the more overwhelming when set in contrast with the weakness and imperfection of man; and then we might ask whether, on the simplest principles of reason, we could venture to think there could be safety in scorning God's threatenings. It is the part even of the commonest prudence to bow meekly before the Lord, and to receive with trembling the messages of His will: and thus the maxim of our text demands to be classed with those sage and sententious proverbs into which is gathered the accumulated wisdom of centuries.

II. The maxim of our text presents itself in accordance with the whole Gospel of Christ. Notice (1) the use which the Holy Spirit makes of the threatenings of the word—the sinner is brought to tremble in himself. In writing to the Corinthian Church, St. Paul makes use of the following expression: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men."

Though there be much in the Bible at which the heart may well shrink and be stricken with dread, it was never designed that the threatenings should seize on a man with a paralyzing grasp. They were rather intended to serve the purpose of solemn, salutary warning, and to lead men to Christ, while the Saviour still waits to receive. He who trembles beneath the Spirit's teaching, trembles *in himself.* You may discern nothing on the surface; there may be the same aspect, the same evenness, the same composure; and yet all the while there is passing within the man a vigorous process of renovation, the whole fabric of intellect being shaken. He is trembling in himself; he is actually transformed into a new creature. "Old things have passed away, and all things have become new." (2) Consider to what this internal trembling leads. Resting follows on trembling. He within whose soul a new creation has arisen on the ruins which have been left by the tremblings of the old: is not he at rest from the threatenings of the law?—for is not Christ the end of the law, for righteousness to every one that believeth? He is at rest from the fear of punishment, at rest from the assaults of malignant spirits, at rest from the terrors of death and the grave.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,038.

Chap. iii., ver. 17, 18.—"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

THE prophet herein declares two things which are of supreme importance in the highest life of man.

I. He declares the possibility of having joy independently of all external things. Here is a man who has a secret—a man who rises amid the pomp of nature, the productiveness of summer, and says: "Though every light be put out, and every root be withered, I have a joy that cannot be impaired." Men of that kind stimulate us; they excite inquiry—they turn our hearts into a new direction of thought, expectation, and purpose.

II. The prophet declares that all his concern is about salvation. Not about secular prosperity. There is a law which says the greater includes the less. Habakkuk has followed the meaning of that law, and made an application of it to his own

life and experience. "I will joy in the God of my salvation." Not in the God of providence only. Salvation includes providence. He who is careful about his soul gathers up his whole life, and is master of the whole situation of his being, prospects, and destiny.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1871, p. 273.

REFERENCES: iii. 17, 18.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 85. iii. 17-19.—J. P. Gledstone, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 51. iii. 19.—A. Raleigh, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 277. iii.—*Pulpit Analyst*, vol. i., pp. 33, 144.

ZEPHANIAH.

REFERENCES: i. 2, 3.—S. Cox, *Expositions*, 3rd series, p. 380. i. 5.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 319. i. 7.—J. S. Candlish, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 367.

Chap. i., ver. 12.—"And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil."

THE metaphor of the text appears to be drawn from that of a man who, having cause for suspicion, searches over every part of his house, and goes down to the very foundation; and because some places are very dark there, he takes with him candles—and, making the light pass carefully over every spot, he scrutinizes for that which he endeavours to discover.

I. It seems evident that the Holy Spirit is mainly intended by the candle of the Lord; not only because God speaks of the Spirit under this image (Job xxix., 2-4), but more particularly because the Church is compared to the candlestick. Christ, who is present in the Church by the Holy Ghost, is that Light which the candlestick, however precious, is worthless if it do not hold. The Holy Ghost is the grand Revealer by which God lays open all the secret places of a man's heart, and from whom all other means whatever gain their efficacy.

II. Subject, however, to this great light, and altogether dependent upon it, there comes next the ministry of God's Word in preaching. That the blessed effect of God's Word to probe the conscience and uncover a man belongs, in an eminent degree, to the public minister of the Word, is certain from 1. Cor. xiv., where St. Paul says: "But if all prophesy [*i.e.* 'preach'], and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all"—not all men, but by every

word that is spoken; "he is judged of all," every word condemns him, and observe the consequence—"and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest."

III. "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord." This undoubtedly means a man's conscience when the Lord has enlightened that conscience by His Spirit, and thereby fitted it to act that great part of laying bare the hidden, inner life.

IV. Observe, when God rises up to search where the light falls the angriest. It is not on the profane; it is not on the vicious; it is not on the world,—they have their condemnation; but the first inquiry of our heart-searching God is this: "Who are they that have quenched their grace?"

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 47.

I. IF we examine a little closely we shall be forced to admit, that there is a direct tendency in prosperity to the fostering and strengthening the corruptions of our nature. The more, for example, a man obtains of wealth or of power, the more, ordinarily, will he desire; so that attachment to earthly things grows with their acquirement; and if it is not impossible, it is very rare and difficult to have the affections fixed on things above whilst the hands are uninterruptedly busied with sweeping together perishable riches. The bent of our dispositions being towards the earth, if nothing ever happen to turn them from earth, there is little ground for expecting that they will centre themselves on heaven.

II. Consider the beneficial results of change and calamity. Change admonishes us of the transitory nature of terrestrial good. Exactly in proportion as calamity is deferred, confidence is strengthened; and if evil be slow in coming, men easily persuade themselves that it will never come at all. If, for many years, there have been no eruption of the volcano from whose outbreak the peasantry had fled with every demonstration of terror, the cottages will again be built around the treacherous mountain, and the smiling gardens clustered on its sides; but if the cottages were swept away year after year by fresh descents of the fiery flood, we may be sure that the peasantry however attached to the place, would finally abandon it altogether, and seek a home in some more secure, though perhaps less lovely, scene. And certainly every change, and yet more a succession of changes, speaks to an individual in the same words as would thus tell on a disturbed, disquieted

peasantry: "Arise ye, and depart hence, for this is not your rest."

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,138.

REFERENCES: i. 12.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 171; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 1st series, p. 6. i. 17.—*Ibid.*, 2nd series, p. 12. ii. 3.—J. S. Candlish, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 371; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 357. iii. 2.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1,580; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 360; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 172. iii. 8-10.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 213. iii. 9.—J. S. Candlish, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 375; J. Keble, *Sermons from Ascension Day to Trinity*, p. 302. iii. 11, 12.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. x., p. 248. iii. 12.—J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 365; S. Cox, *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. ii., pp. 393, 457, 529, 592, 655, 719. iii. 13.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 173. iii. 17.—*Ibid.*, p. 173; J. S. Candlish, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 45.

Chap. iii., ver. 17.—"He will rest in His love."

THOSE who have ever known that sense of repose too deep for words—the thought which feels that, by any expression of itself it would only mar its own intensity—would understand the beauty of the fact, that the sentence which we have translated, "He will rest in His love," is more literally still, "He will be silent in His love." For there is rest beyond language, whose very eloquence it is that it cannot choose but to be silent.

I. Notice, on what the love of God really lies. It lies, first, on that eternity, in which you may go back for ever, and never find the moment when it began. It lies, secondly, on the vast sacrifice of Christ, and the immensity of the value of the comprehensiveness of the atoning work It lies, thirdly, on the breadth of the atonement. And it lies, fourthly, on all those attributes which go to make its own great name; and which have been gathered by the grace which is in Christ Jesus into the one prerogative of love.

II. There is a law in the material world that, left to itself, all motion will go on to move, and all rest will go on to rest, for ever. It is true a thousand-fold with the character of God. It is, we know, not only a doctrine of our faith, but a matter of personal experience with every one of us, that "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved

them unto the end"—that wherever love lights, there love rests; and that He will abide in His love.

III. Let our watchword of duty, this year, be one which the most closely copies Him—the "rest" of a fixed heart. When all is mystery, and you cannot see one step, and the mind must not reason and cannot reason, let the soul rest its silent rest. Wherever God has placed you, rest in your lot till He comes. Rest, and by resting learn the rest which is to rest for ever.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 4th series, p. 117.

HAGGAI.

REFERENCES: i. 2-4.—J. C. Hare, *Sermons in Herstmonceux Church*, vol. ii., p. 1. i. 2-6.—B. G. Wilkinson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 168. i. 5-11.—J. C. Hare, *Sermons in Herstmonceux Church*, vol. ii., p. 23. i. 6.—J. N. Norton, *Golden Truths*, p. 33; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 14. i. 7.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 175. i. 7-14.—J. C. Hare, *Sermons in Herstmonceux Church*, vol. ii., p. 47. i. 9—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 300. i. 13.—J. J. West, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3131. ii. 1-5.—J. C. Hare, *Sermons in Herstmonceux Church*, vol. ii., p. 65. ii. 4.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., No. 215. ii. 4, 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1,918. ii. 5.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Ascension Day to Trinity*, p. 239. ii. 6-7.—J. C. Hare, *Sermons in Herstmonceux Church*, vol. ii., p. 83. ii. 6-9.—P. J. Gloag, *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 55.

Chap. ii., ver. 7.—"The Desire of all nations shall come."

I. JESUS was the Desire of all nations—(1) as the Kinsman of the whole human family; (2) because He only could bestow those precious blessings which the world needed; (3) because all nations shall one day be made happy in Him.

II. He appeared—(1) at the very period marked out for His birth; (2) in the very manner which had been foretold; (3) for the performance of the very work which had been before marked out for Him.

III. The prophet Haggai mentions certain remarkable events which should distinguish the Messiah's coming—(1) all nations were to be shaken; (2) the Jewish Temple should be filled with His glory.

J. N. NORTON, *Old Paths*, p. 11.

I. ONCE Christ was the Desire of all nations, even though when He came unto His own His own received Him not, and was in very truth despised and rejected of men. Nevertheless, of this there can be no doubt, that the world, by woful experience, had learned its need, had found out its want of a Saviour. His first coming was looked to with desire. Let us ask our consciences whether we look to His second coming with any-

thing but dismay and dread. It took four thousand years to make men feel their want of a Saviour; it has taken but half that time to make one moiety of those who, nevertheless, call themselves by His name, to live in practical unbelief; and the other moiety to regard His second coming with terror, and not with joy.

II. What made Him the Desire of all nations? It was this, they wanted some hope, some refuge beyond this miserable world. Their present was dark; their future was darker still. The pleasures of sin for a season—that made up their life. And death was unredeemed with one single ray of brightness. Remorse they might know; despair might haunt them: but of the peace and consolations of a faithful follower of Jesus they had never tasted. No wonder that a Saviour from themselves, and from sin and death, was the "Desire of all nations."

III. Ours is the last twilight of the world. Ages ago we were warned that we were in the last times, and so we are brought to the thought of that second coming of Him who, at His first coming, was the Desire of all nations. To that we must look; for the signs of that coming we must watch. Are we preparing for it? Are we trying at least to desire our Lord's return? It is only in the way of watchfulness and prayer that this desire can be attained.

E. W. PAGET, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. i., p. 1.

I. THERE is a Desire of all nations; something all human beings are vaguely longing for which would put them right. Many of them do not know it, but it is Jesus Christ. Every human being that ever lived, who felt that this world would not do, and that he must have more to satisfy and give rest, was blindly desiring Christ, was stretching vague hands through the darkness after Him. In old phrase which use has emptied of all real meaning to many of us, He is the satisfying portion of the soul.

II. It is a great thing, if a sorrowful too, about the human heart, that it cannot be satisfied. It marks our Divine original, that we never can for long enjoy the real satisfiedness of ruminating cattle, that have got all they want. What all men seek—unawares seek—is Christ. The happy days that do not come, the quiet content that surely will be reached at last—all are in Him, and in the life and the home to which He would lead us if we would but go.

A. K. H. B., *From a Quiet Place*, p. 131.

REFERENCES: ii. 7.—E. Dukes, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 248; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 357, vol. iv., p. 312;

G. Huntington, *Sermons for the Holy Seasons of the Church*, p. 1; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 408. ii. 8, 9.—J. C. Hare, *Sermons in Herstmonceux Church*, vol. ii., p. 101. ii. 11-14.—*Ibid.*, p. 123. ii. 13, 14.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 362. ii. 17.—*Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 218. ii. 19.—A. Scott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 268. ii. 20-23.—J. C. Hare, *Sermons in Herstmonceux Church*, vol. ii., p. 143.

Chap. ii., ver. 9.—"The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts."

I. These words refer to the first and the second temple at Jerusalem. The first temple was burnt by the Chaldees, and the wall of Jerusalem was broken down, and the people carried captive to Babylon, and it was more than fifty years after that the foundation of the second house was laid. It was an occasion to stir up mixed feelings among the people. The glory of their nation had passed away. They came back as exiles, by the permission of a foreign power, to the land that their fathers had conquered. Hope and recollection struggled against each other, when they dwelt by turns on the state from which they had been cast down, and on their hopes of restoration. Jehovah would not manifest Himself in the same degree as He had before to a people who were suffering the punishment of their backslidings; and the house they had built Him was but a poor copy of the temple that had perished. Yet Haggai promised that this second temple in its poverty should be more glorious than the first, because the desire of all nations, even Christ Himself, should come to it, and the Lord of hosts should fill it with glory.

II. This teaches us that it is not the house, but the presence that sanctifies the house, that constitutes its glory. It rests with us to hinder or help the work of God according as we seek God here in earnest, or let our hearts go after covetousness.

Archbishop Thomson, *Lincoln's Inn Sermons*, p. 390.

ZECHARIAH.

REFERENCES: i. 5.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 296.

Chap. i., vers. 5, 6.—"Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever? But My words and My statutes, which I commanded My servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers?"

I. CONSIDER, first, the solemn and yet familiar thought here of the passing away of the hearers and the speakers alike.

II. Notice, next, the contrast between the fleeting hearers and speakers and the abiding word.

There is nothing so transient as the words that are spoken by Christian teachers. Of all the seed that is sown, our Master taught us that three-fourths, at least, was likely to perish. And even where the word takes root in men's hearts, how swiftly the speaker of it passes and is forgotten! And yet, in all these fleeting and mingled human utterances, does there not lie an immortal and imperishable centre, even the word of the living God? The word of the Lord endureth for ever, and this enduring word is that story of Christ's incarnation, death for our sins, resurrection, and ascension, which by the Gospel is preached unto you.

III. Consider the witness of the past generations to the immortal word.

Our prophet is speaking to the men who returned from exile, and he appeals to them concerning the history of the preceding generations which had been carried away into captivity, according to the threatenings of the pre-exilian prophets. And, says Zechariah in effect, though the prophets' words no more sound, and the men that heard them are stiff in death, that past generation is a witness that even through human lips and to careless ears a word is preached that will be fulfilled.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, December 9th, 1886.

Chap. i., vers. 7-17.

THE rider in the myrtle grove.

I. The prophet saw a grove of myrtle trees in a hollow or low place. By the myrtle grove all are agreed is signified the

covenant people, the nation of Israel, and by its being in a low place is indicated their depressed and sad condition. In the Hebrew mind the idea of modest beauty and freshness was associated with the myrtle, and hence we find this introduced as symbolical of the Church under the reign of the Messiah, when, "instead of the briar," the symbol of the world under the curse, "shall come up the myrtle tree" (Isa. lv. 13).

II. The mounted rider, though in appearance as a man, is described as the angel of Jehovah. By this appellation is designated in Scripture a being who on various occasions appeared to men, and who, though coming forth as the angel or messenger of Jehovah, is at the same time represented as a Divine being, having the power of God, receiving the honours due only to God, and exercising the proper functions of the Almighty (cf. Gen. xvi. 7-14, xxii. 11-19, xxxi. 11, etc., xlviii. 15, 16; Exod. xiii. 2, xxiii. 20, 21; Josh. v. 13-15). A comparison of these passages leads to the conclusion that the angel of Jehovah is none other than God manifest in human form, the Being who, as the Captain of the Lord's host, led up Israel to Canaan, the Being who came forth to execute vengeance on the enemies of the covenant people, and who was known to Israel as their Protector and Advocate. That this Being is the same who in the fulness of time came to our world as the Angel of the Covenant the teachings of the New Testament lead us confidently to believe.

III. For the consolation and encouragement of the people, the prophet had to tell them that, depressed as was their condition, the Angel of the Lord, the Leader, the Protector, the Redeemer of Israel, was still in the midst of them. He was there, standing and still, but ready to ride forth in their defence, and to send judgments on their adversaries, which was indicated by the vision of His being mounted on a red horse, the symbol of war and bloodshed. He is also with them as their Intercessor with God. Hence He appears in this vision as making intercession for them, beseeching God to have pity on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah; and, now that the time of chastisement was at an end, that He would be gracious to them, grant them full restoration and establishment in their own land.

W. LINDSAY ALEXANDER, *Zechariah's Visions and Warnings*, p. 1; see also *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 61.

REFERENCES: i. 8.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 270. i. 8-21.—*Ibid., Sermons*, vol. x., No. 598. i. 12, 13.—*Ibid., Evening by Evening* p. 55.

Chap. i., vers. 18-21.—"Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem," etc.

I. As physical emblems of force, horns are in the prophetic visions representative of earthly powers or kingdoms. The number four, in its prophetic acceptation, is the signature of the world, and is used here to indicate powers coming on every side or from all quarters. As in the former vision the riders were represented as having gone over the whole earth and found all quiet, so here all the earthly powers hostile to the people of God are, in general, indicated by the four horns.

II. As the prophet continued to look, Jehovah showed him—rather caused him to see—four workmen or artificers, and informed him that the workmen had come to frighten away, or discomfit and cast down, these oppressors. "These are come to fray them." In modern usage the verb "fray" signifies to *rub* or *file down*, but in old English it is used in the sense of *terrify* or *frighten*. The four workmen do not symbolise four special powers by which the enemies of Judah were to be discomfited and cast down; as the horns were four, so an equal number of workmen came to indicate the completeness of the overthrow of the enemies of Judah. Each horn has its destined destroyer.

III. What was thus showed for the comfort of the people of God in the old time is no less for the comfort and encouragement of the Church in all ages and places. The Angel of the Lord, the Divine Redeemer, abides for ever with that Church which He hath purchased with His blood. And exalted as He is to the throne of His glory, having all power in heaven and on earth, He can send forth at any time agencies by which the power of the Church's enemies shall be broken and all their forces routed. It behoves the Church, then, to have faith in her exalted Head, and patiently to wait for Him.

W. LINDSAY ALEXANDER, *Zechariah's Visions and Warnings*, p. 17; see also *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 220.

REFERENCES: i. 20.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 342. ii. 1-5 —*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 604.

Chap. ii., ver. 1-13.—"I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand," etc.

I. IN this vision God presented to the prophet, and through

him to the nation at large, the prospect and the assurance of the restoration of Jerusalem, and the re-establishment of the Jewish state as it had been before the captivity. The city should not only be rebuilt, but greatly extended; the temple should be restored, and the worship of Jehovah resumed; His presence should be with His people, and they should enjoy His protection; and whilst they were thus blessed judgment should come upon those nations that had oppressed them, and they should have supremacy over those by whom they had been enslaved. All this was literally fulfilled. But even in these promises there seems to be a reference to things of still higher import, and of spiritual significancy. The speaker here is the Angel of Jehovah, and He, whilst He speaks of Himself as Jehovah's messenger, at the same time uses language which no mere created angel could use. In His own name He threatens to punish the nations, and that with a mere motion of His hand; and to Israel He promises for God that He would come and dwell among them as their God, and inherit Judah as His portion. Who can such a speaker be but that Being who in the fulness of time appeared in our world, uniting in His one Person the Divine nature and the human; He who came and dwelt among men, and was Emmanuel, God with us? May we not say, then, that there is here a promise of blessing to the Church through the advent of the Redeemer?

II. It is in accordance with the general strain of prophetic announcement concerning the latter dispensation, when the speaker here announces that many nations should be joined to the Lord, and become His people. The conversion of individuals might take place under the ancient dispensation; a few proselytes might from time to time join themselves to the people of God; but it was reserved for the times of the Messiah for nations as such to be converted to the Lord. Only under Him on whose shoulder the government is laid, and who shall reign from sea to sea and from the rivers to the ends of the earth, shall the forces of the Gentiles be brought into the Church, and the world be converted to God.

W. Lindsay Alexander, *Zechariah's Visions and Warnings*, p. 23; see also *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 222.

References: ii. 4.—J. Hiles Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 232; J. N. Norton, *Every Sunday*, p. 106. ii. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 452. ii. 10.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 1st series, p. 12.

Chap. iii., ver. 1.—"And He showed me Joshua the High Priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at His right hand to resist Him."

THE vision of Zechariah appears to us in its secondary and broader interpretation to be a solemn picture of what is now going on in the Church of Christ. We may trace its reality in the dispensation of the Gospel.

I. Our first illustration of the text will be taken from the manifestation of Christ to the Gentile world. The visit of the three wise men from lands beyond the limits of Israel, and the acceptance of their offerings and homage, was a type of the drawing into Christ not only of the descendants of Abraham, but of all families of the earth. But the light of heaven has not all at once made way to the depths of the human heart. In the varying fortunes of the Christian Church we recognise the glory or the reproach of Christ Jesus our Lord. As it is Christ from His throne who animates the souls and influences the hearts of His saints to do and suffer for His name's sake, so is it the apostate seraph, from his lurid abode, who stirs up adversaries on every side. It is impossible to explain the perpetual strife between truth and error without seeing in fact that which Zechariah beheld in ecstatic trance: "Jesus the High Priest, and Satan standing at His right hand."

II. In this prophetic vision Satan is depicted not as an open enemy of the High Priest, but as standing at His right hand—not, that is, occupying the position of a confessed foe, but of a false friend. And just similar has been the resistance of Satan to to the kingdom of Christ. Doubtless the devil has had recourse to open violence, as when he stirred up the Jews to the Crucifixion, or roused the fury of persecution against the saints; but this has not been the general character of his resistance. It has been secret and stealthy; it has mainly sought to undermine rather than to cast down, to weaken from within rather than assail from without. He has resisted Christianity out of Christianity. The history of the world, of the Church, of every individual soul, is but the outward result of the mystic vision of Joshua the High Priest, and Satan standing at His right hand to resist him.

BISHOP WOODFORD, *Occasional Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 38.

REFERENCES: iii. 1.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p 332. iii. 1-5.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 611. iii. 1-10.—W L. Alexander, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 518. iii. 2.—G. T. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 166. iii. 9, 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 953.

Chap. iv., vers. 1-14.

The candelabrum and olive trees.

I. By the candelabrum was symbolised the Israelitish community, the nation of the old covenant, the people of theocracy. But Israel was itself a symbol and type; it was the visible manifestation of that invisible spiritual community, the Church of the living God, which embraces the faithful of all ages and places. It is represented as made of the most precious of metals, pure gold, to indicate the worth and excellence of that which God hath chosen for Himself as His special treasure; and it is represented as having seven lamps, to indicate that the Church is a luminous body, having light in itself, and appearing as the luminary from which proceeds light to the world.

II. The light which the Church possesses is not from herself; it is light communicated and sustained by influences from above. Hence in the vision which Zechariah saw the lamps were supplied by oil, not by human ministration, but through channels and pipes from the olive trees, which stood beside and were over the candelabrum. Oil is the proper symbol of the Holy Spirit's influences. Apart from the Divine Spirit the Church is dark and cold and feeble; but through the visitation of the Spirit she is animated and invigorated, becomes luminous and glorious, and is crowned with success as she labours to erect God's temple on earth.

III. God sustains His Church by His grace. But this grace comes to men through certain appointed media. This was symbolised in the vision by the fruit-bearing branches of the olive trees, and by the conduits and the pipes through which the oil was conveyed to the lamps. The branches represented the sacerdotal and civil authorities in Israel. These were in the old time the channels through which God conveyed His grace to His Church on earth; and, as they operated through means of subordinate functionaries, the branches were represented in the vision as emptying themselves into the conduits and pipes, by means of which the oil was conveyed to the lamps. When the symbol was again exhibited (Rev. i. 12), the great Head of the Church Himself in proper Person was seen in the midst of the seven golden candelabra. Through Him, as the great Priest and King, uniting in Himself the two offices and discharging the functions of both to His Church, "the oil of Divine grace is poured into the candlestick of the Church in

infinitely greater abundance than through any of the previous servants of God."—(HENGSTENBERG.)

W. LINDSAY ALEXANDER, *Zechariah's Visions and Warnings*, p. 59; see also *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 96.

REFERENCES: iv. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 149; G. H. Wilkinson, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 280; see also *Church Sermons by Eminent Clergymen*, vol. i., p. 401.

Chap. iv., vers. 6, 7.—"Then He answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts," etc.

I. WHEN Zerubbabel prophesied, the foundation of the temple had been laid, and he predicted that the same prince who laid the foundation should also lay the top-stone. The foundation of the Church has been laid; it grows up slowly but surely, a holy temple in the Lord. Our joyful hope is that He who laid the foundation will also finish it.

II. The propagation of the Gospel is not only for but by Christ. The Sower of the seed all through this dispensation is the Son of man; it is He who preaches peace, through the minds and voices of many preachers, in many languages; He publishes the testimony through all the earth, and saves sinners. The construction of the Church is also by Christ from first to last, and the builders from Paul and Apollos downwards are nothing without Him. Christ is always building His people together, healing, reconciling, moulding, blending, compacting them together as living stones that form the one temple of the one Holy Ghost.

III. Mark well what the energy is which surmounts or removes obstacles. Not might, nor power of mortal man. The upbuilding of the Church in the face of all difficulties has been possible, and is possible now, only under the might and power of the Holy Spirit.

D. FRASER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 161.

Chap. iv., ver. 7.—"He shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it."

I. PROPHECY in the long reach of its onward flight stoops again and again to many fulfilments. There is the historical fulfilment, and there is the evangelical fulfilment, the spiritual fulfilment, the practical fulfilment, and the final and glorious fulfilment. There was a "headstone brought out with shoutings" when Zerubbabel's temple was finished, and the old men wept and the young men cried aloud for joy. There

was a headstone brought forth with shoutings "when the Lord Jesus Christ," the firstborn of every creature, the top-stone of God's creation, was unveiled to human view at Bethelehem. There will be a "headstone brought out with shoutings" when the whole Church stands in its completeness, and its song of victory goes up, while God inhabits the praises of Israel.

II. There are two stones to which Christ is compared in the Bible—the "foundation-stone," and the "head" or corner-stone. Christ is both. (1) First, He is the beginning of every good thing on which it rests as its basis. "Other foundation can no man lay than is laid, which is Christ Jesus." (2) And then afterwards, in due time, He is the "head" or "corner-stone," into which everything gathers itself up as all its aim and all its object, its glory and its last attainment, and in the sameness of those two stones lies the comfort—the Alpha is the Omega,—in Christ we begin, in Christ we end,—we lay all upon His death, and we bring out all unto His glory. And therefore, because He is the beginning and the ending, the "foundation stone" and "top-stone," therefore we cry, "Grace, grace unto it."

III. And what is it we mean when we use that word "grace" in its double emphasis? We mean that it is all free favour, God's own pure mercy. Whatever good thing we have, it was purchased for us by Christ's blood. Whatever good thing we do, it was wrought in us by Christ's Spirit.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 8th series, p. 253.

Chap. iv., ver. 10.—"Who hath despised the day of small things?"

CONSIDER the tendency in men to indulge contempt for good things, in the littleness and weakness of their beginnings and early operations.

I. There is much of a disposition to undervalue, "despise," the small beginnings and slow, early stages of a good work. (1) It comes from not duly apprehending the preciousness of what is good, in any, even the smallest portion of it. (2) In the indulgence of this disposition it is left out of sight how much in many cases was requisite to be previously done to bring the small beginning into existence at all; it did not start into existence of itself. (3) Another thing is, that we are apt to set far too high a price on our own efforts and services. Our self-importance cannot endure that so much of our agency, *ours*, should be consumed for so small a result. (4) We over-measure our brief span of mortal existence. We want to contract the

Almighty's plan to our own limits of time, and to precipitate the movement, that we may see clearly to the end of it.

II. In the religious and moral department things that as yet are small are to be estimated, not according to their present dimensions, but according to their principle, and according to what they are to become. We are to recognise in them a Divine principle; that God has put in them His will, His power, His Spirit. This includes (1) the progress of education; (2) the progress of Christianity.

III. Pride, sluggishness, and covetousness have all something to do with the temper which leads men to despise small things. But the good cause of God, of Christ, of human improvement, is certain, is destined to advance and triumph. The awful mystery why this triumphant ascendency is so slowly achieved, so long delayed in this world, will, it is reasonable to believe, be one of the subjects for illumination in a higher state of existence, where enlarging faculties will have endless duration for their exercise. It may then be seen that the whole course of the world, from the beginning to the end, was "a day of small things," as compared with the sequel,—only as a brief introduction to an immense and endless economy.

J. FOSTER, *Lectures*, 2nd series, p. 365.

REFERENCES: iv. 10.—Spurgeon, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 281; E. White, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxi., p. 187; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 333; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 365. v. 1-11.—W. Lindsay Alexander, *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 175. v.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 119. vi. 1-8.—*Ibid.*, vol. v., p. 107.

Chap. vi., ver. 12, 13.—"Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The Branch; . . . and He shall be a priest upon His throne."

I. A PRIEST upon His throne in the temple of the Lord. Such is the vision upon which the gaze of Zechariah was fixed, and which gave joy to his heart in that cloudy and dark day. The great ideal of which Hebrew psalmists have sung and Hebrew prophets spoken shall be realised. The promised Son of David shall be seen seated as a priest upon His throne in the temple, bearing glory and ruling.

II. Five hundred weary years passed by, and as the prophecy of Isaiah and Zechariah awaited fulfilment the sons of Zion mourned. But at length the time appointed came. Jesus is born of Mary, and He is the man whose name is The Branch,

growing out of the roots of Jesse. He comes (1) to build the temple of the Lord. That is His great work during His ministry on earth. (2) To be enthroned in it, and to rule over it as King. The ascension of Jesus is His entrance as man into heaven, and His enthronement in our nature on the throne of God. As the enthroned King, Jesus reigns over His Church as the Vicegerent of God.

III. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews repeats the revelation of Jesus as the enthroned Priest, and teaches us its practical effect on Christian conduct. He tells us that we have a great High Priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God. He teaches us to recognise His sympathy because of His experimental knowledge of the conditions of our life. He reveals Him to us as enthroned on the throne of grace, in the fulness of power, and with the tenderness of a perfect sympathy, and bids us "come with boldness to the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

G. Body, *Anglican Pulpit of To-Day*, p. 258.

References: vi. 12, 13.—Bishop Moorhouse, *The Expectation of the Christ*, p. 80.

Chap. vi., ver. 13.—"He shall build the temple of the Lord; . . . and He shall be a priest upon His throne."

I. The true hope of the world is a Priest. The idea of priesthood is universal. It has been distorted and abused; it has been made the foundation of spiritual tyranny. The priest has not been the teacher nor the elevator of the people. All over the world he has been the ally of oppression and darkness; he has hindered and cramped social and intellectual progress. And yet, in spite of all this, there the office stands, and wherever men go, by some strange perversity, they take with them this idea, and choose from among themselves those who, being endowed with some sort of ceremonial and symbolic purity, shall discharge for their brethren the double office of representing them before God and of representing God to them. That is what the world means, with absolute and entire unanimity, by a priest—one who shall be sacrificer, intercessor, representative, bearer of man's worship, channel of God's blessing.

What is the Priest whom men crave? (1) The first requisite is oneness with those whom He represents. We have a Priest who "in all things is made like unto His brethren." (2) As in nature and character, so in function, Christ corresponds to the widely expressed wants of men, as shown in their priesthoods.

II. The priest of the world is the King of men. (1) *He does rule.* "The kingdom of Christ" is no fanciful phrase. (2) The foundation of His rule is His sacrifice. (3) His rule is wielded in gentleness.

III. The Priest-King of men builds among men the temple of God. (1) Christ is Himself the true temple of God. (2) Christ builds the temple. By faith the individual soul becomes the abode of God, and into our desecrated spirits there comes the King of Glory. (3) Christ builds this temple because He is the temple. By His incarnation and work He makes our communion with God and God's dwelling in us possible. By His death and sacrifice He draws men to Himself, and blends them in a living unity. By the gift of His Spirit and His life He hallows their wills, and makes them partakers of His own likeness; so that, coming to Him, we also are built up a spiritual house. (4) Christ builds the temple, and uses us as His servants in the work.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, 2nd series, p. 310.

REFERENCES: vi. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 191; vol. xxv., No. 1495; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 174. vii. 1-14.—W. Lindsay Alexander, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 105. vii. 3.—A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 353. vii. 5, 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 438; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiates to Malachi*, p. 368. vii., viii.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 216.

Chap. viii., ver. 5.—"The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing."

I. LEARN from the text that God thinks about boys and girls, and notices what they do.

II. Learn that God allows boys and girls to play. (1) Play suits the age of boys and girls. (2) Play helps children to grow strong and healthy. (3) Play teaches children to bear and forbear, and to put up with disappointments. (4) Play makes boys and girls learn better when it is over. (5) Play of any kind is better than idleness.

III. Remember these four bits of advice: (1) In all your play remember the eye and ear of God. (2) In all your play keep your temper. (3) Do not neglect work because of play. (4) Never forget that all true happiness comes from Christ.

BISHOP RYLE, *Boys and Girls Playing*, p. 9.

REFERENCES: viii. 5.—F. W. Farrar, *In the Days of Thy Youth*, p. 367; J. N. Norton, *Every Sunday*, p. 335.

Chap. viii., ver. 6.—"Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in Mine eyes? saith the Lord of hosts."

Our age is wonderful, not merely in the number of strange and unprecedented things happening in it, and in the strange and unprecedented character that belongs to it as a whole, but also in the prominence of wonder as an element in the view which it takes of itself. It is wonderful because it is an age of wonder. The comfort of the text is comprehended under two words: the first "safety," and the second "enlargement." These describe the two needs of every man's life, and these two needs both find a supply in the assurance that what are wonders and mysteries to us are perfectly clear to God, within whose life our lives are hid.

I. Remember where so much of the sense of danger and the sense of unsafety in life comes from. It is not from the things that we see and that we have known all along; it is from the half-seen forms that hover upon the borders of reality and unreality—from things which evidently are something, but of which we cannot perfectly make out just what they are. At sea it is not the ship whose shape you can perfectly discern, all whose movements you can follow; it is the ship that hovers like a dim ghost in the fog, moving by an unseen hand, evidently there, but all bathed in mystery—that is the ship you fear may strike you. It is not clear, sound, well-proved, certain truths that frighten men for the stability of their faith; it is the ghostly speculations, the vaguely-outlined, faint suggestions that hover in the misty light of dim hypotheses; it is the forms of truth that peer out of just opened but not explored chambers of new sciences—these are the things that make the dim, uneasy sense of danger that besets the minds of so many believers. If any so-called discovery which men are teaching me to-day is really true, God has known it all along. "Do not be frightened," He says. "I cannot be taken by surprise." "If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people, should it also be marvellous in Mine eyes?" He who believes truth only as the way to God—he who regards opinions as valueless, except as they agree with the infallible judgments of God—is the man for whom all life is safe, and whose faith faces the changing thoughts and destinies of the world, however astounding they may seem, without a thought of fear.

II. Such a man is also free. If He who sits at the centre of everything, and sees the visions of the universe with the perfect

clearness of its Maker—if God can really speak so that we can hear Him, and say, "It is impossible to you, but it is not impossible to Me; it is marvellous in your eyes, but it is not in Mine"—if He can say that of any task which is overwhelming men with its immensity—that word of His must snap our fetters, that word of His must set free the little strength of all of us to strike our little blows, must enlarge our lives, and send them out to bolder ventures with earnestness and hope.

PHILLIPS BROOKS, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 361.

REFERENCES: viii. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1,747; S. Macnaughten, *Real Religion and Real Life*, p. 147. viii. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 543. viii. 16, 17.—A. H. Jones, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 310.

Chap. viii., ver. 19.—"The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace."

WHEN we reflect upon the present state of the Holy Church throughout the world, so different from that which was promised to her in prophecy, the doubt is apt to suggest itself to us, whether it is right to rejoice when there is so much to mourn over and to fear. When men discern duly the forlorn state in which the spouse of Christ at present lies, how can they have the heart to rejoice? The desponding soul falls back when it makes the effort; it is not equal to the ceremonial which comes natural to light hearts, and at best but coldly obeys what they anticipate without being bidden. "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" Yet since there is some danger of over-sensitiveness in this matter, it may be useful to make some remarks upon it.

I. This then must be ever kept in mind when such thoughts arise within us—that cheerfulness and lightness of heart are not only privileges but duties. Cheerfulness is a great Christian duty. That sorrow, that solicitude, that fear, that repentance, is not Christian which has not its portion of Christian joy. For "God is greater than our hearts," and no evil, past or future, within or without, is equal to this saying—that Christ has died and reconciled the world unto Himself. We are ever in His presence, be we cast down or be we exalted, and "in His presence is the fulness of joy."

II. Even the Jews attempted to rejoice in captivity, though it was prophesied against them, "I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation;" whereas the

very reverse is graciously assured in the text to the Gospel Church, that her times of humiliation should be times of rejoicing. We have a still more remarkable and solemn instance of the duty of keeping festival and rejoicing, even in the darkest day, in our Lord's own history. If there was a season in which gloom was allowable, it was on the days and hours before His Passion; but He who came to bring joy on earth and not sorrow, even in that awful time kept the feast—nay, anticipated it, as if though He Himself was to be the very Paschal Lamb, still He was not thereby excused from sharing in the typical rite. And a few days before it He took part in a public and, as it were, triumphant pageant, as though the bitterness of death had been already past.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Sermons on Subjects of the Day*, p 381.

REFERENCES: viii. 19.—A. Mursell, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 93; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. x., p. 239. viii. 21.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1107; A. F. Barfield, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 215. viii. 23.—W. Jay, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 37. viii.—W. Lindsay Alexander, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 309. ix. 1-8.—*Ibid.*, vol. viii., p. 42. ix. 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1861; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 3rd series, p. 78. ix. 9, 10.—W. Lindsay Alexander, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 109. ix. 11, 12.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 371. ix. 11-17.—*Ibid.*, p. 216.

Chap. ix., ver. 12.—"Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope: even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee."

THE prophet is speaking to those who are emphatically called "Christ's prisoners," those for whom, by His kingly power, He has gone up on high, and given to them repentance, that He might make them spiritual captives.

I. No words could be framed more appropriate, or expressive of souls under spiritual distress, than those which the prophet here uses: "prisoners of hope." Why does the believer's soul feel so fast bound and so miserable? He was not always so; but he has felt so ever since he began to *hope*, ever since a nobler and a loftier feeling came into his mind. From that hour, when the love of God first awoke in his soul, he has longed to go forth into a wider field than he can ever compass, and to expatiate on the image and the work and the glory of his God. Therefore, because his desires are so large, his soul feels so imprisoned. "Hope" has made this world feel so narrow, his body so cumbersome, those sins so heavy, and that nature such a great hindrance.

II. The prisoners of hope should "turn to the stronghold," keep close to the Lord Jesus. Pass your waiting time inside the fortress of Jesus. Let Him be your tower for ever, and in that stronghold He will bury your fears and keep your joys.

III. God Himself has graciously added the reason of the confidence of those who have by His grace exchanged the prison for the stronghold. "Even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee." It appears evident that in these words God is continuing the address which He was making in the preceding verse, and that He speaks to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is part of the engagement which the Father has made to the Son. When Christ sees of the travail of His soul He is satisfied, as when one delights in a purchase, and thinks that the price was not to be compared with the value received.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 10th series, p. 149.

FEAR and hope have two things in common. (1) They are both prospective. They have to do with things future. (2) They regard that future as possible. With these two points of resemblance, hope and fear are in all else opposite and contradictory to each other. Fear is the apprehension of a future possible evil; hope is the anticipation of a future possible good.

I. What is the place of hope in the Gospel? We believe that Christ makes it everything. St. Paul even says, "We are saved by hope." And if there could be stronger words than these, we find them in that brief and touching account of Christ's own life below, "For the joy which was set before Him, He endured the Cross." What is that but saying that the anticipation of a blessed future, which is the definition of hope, supported our Lord Jesus Christ in working our redemption?

II. Consider two of these future good things which God has promised, and which therefore the Christian hopes for. (1) One of these is growth, progress, at last perfection, in holiness. This is a hope peculiar to the Gospel. It is also a promise. If Christ be true, He offers us holiness. That is what makes His religion a Gospel. (2) I knit into one the hope of holiness and the hope of heaven. What is happiness, what is glory, but the being perfectly holy, like God, filled with the Spirit? The Holy Spirit is called "the earnest of our inheritance." Why? Because the inheritance itself is the Spirit; the having the Spirit at last not by measure, the

being satisfied with God's likeness, the being made to drink abundantly of what the Psalmist calls "the river of His pleasures." That is heaven. And so the one hope runs up into the other, and he who is athirst for holiness is on his way to heaven.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Last Words at Doncaster*, p. 54.

REFERENCES: ix. 12.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xxii., p. 213; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 101; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 175. ix. 13.—*Ibid.*, p. 333. ix. 16, 17.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 388.

Chap. ix., ver. 17.—"How great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids."

I. THESE visions of earthly blessing have their heavenly substance. They show us the joy and the feast of the old creation; God's people rejoicing under His benign Fatherhood, eating the fruits of the earth with a holy gladness. But what are all these—the joy of God's people in Jerusalem, the holy mountain, the cities of peace, the fair lands, the fruitful vineyards, the corn and the wine, the harvest and the vintage, the shouting and the feast of ingathering—what are they all but one great prophecy, a symbol and a sacrament, the old creation in its earthly festival witnessing and waiting for the new? The text is a luminous prophecy of the Word made flesh, revealed first by personal manifestation upon earth, and then by His Spirit through the Church. What is this goodness and this beauty but the perfect mystery of His Divine manhood? They are not so much two attributes as two aspects of His Person. Goodness is inward beauty; beauty is outward goodness. They are inseparable, and express to us the perfection of Him who is God and man; perfect alike in both; in majesty and meekness, in love and in humility, in His passion and in His power.

II. And as it is a prophecy of the incarnation, so it is also of the Holy Eucharist, the feast of the new creation. Consider the blessings which the Lord of the harvest pours out on those who come to this supper, where He is both the Master and the Feast. (1) The first grace He gives is rest. He gives rest from the burden of sin, assuring us of forgiveness. The consciousness of past guilt remains, but it is suspended in the consciousness of present rest. The holy communion also sets the heart and will free from the misery of inward faults. (2) When God gives rest, He gives also refreshment. He renews our strength for labours yet to come. The soul wastes faster

than the body. Every night gives back to the body what every day takes from it; but with the soul, not so. The spiritual decays run on into to-morrow, and to-morrow begins with an inclination to a lower tone; its own temptations swell the evil; one day heaps its sin upon another, and our spiritual decline gains in speed as it gains in time. These decays are always advancing in every soul not supported by habitual communion with Christ. (3) In this great feast of joy He gives us the constant perception of His love. Love alone, by its own kindred perception, feels love. And this crowning grace the Master gives to His servants at this feast of rest. His love falls as a light of fire, making hearts that long for Him to burn.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 228.

REFERENCES: x. 6.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 374. x. 12.—*Ibid.*, p. 377; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1,805. x.—W. Lindsay Alexander, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 356. xi. 1-8.—*Ibid.*, vol. ix., p. 178.

Chap. xi., ver. 2.—"Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen."

SUCH words are universally applicable whenever calamity falls on those better or more exalted than ourselves; and such calamity may serve as a warning, teaching us to expect our own share of trouble.

I. If our blessed Saviour Himself be the first cedar tree on which we gaze, the cedar tree "smitten of God and afflicted," we may set in contrast the holiness and the suffering of the Mediator—the holiness such that "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth;" the suffering such that "His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men." What must sin be, what its hatefulness in God's sight, if it were punished thus fearfully in the Person of Christ? Can you think that God will deal lightly with you, though He dealt thus sternly with His well-beloved Son, and that justice will not be rigid in exacting penalties from you, when it would not relax one tittle of its demands, though its Victim were the spotless, yea, even the Divine?

II. Not only was the Captain of our salvation made perfect through suffering, but the same discipline has been employed from the first in regard of all those whom God has conducted to glory. There has been no more observable feature of the Divine dealings, whether under the patriarchal, legal, or Christian dispensation, than this of the employment of afflictions as an

instrument of purification. It has not been found that any amount of piety has secured its possessor against troubles; on the contrary, the evidence has seemed the other way—piety has appeared to expose men to additional and severe trials. The fact is indisputable, that through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom of heaven. And we do not see that any fact should be more startling to those who are living without God, and perhaps secretly hoping for immunity at the last. If they survey the dealings of their Maker with this earth, they cannot deny that the cedar has been bent and blighted by the hurricane, while comparatively a scene of calm has been around the fir; and from this they are bound to conclude the great fact of a judgment to come. Surely the blows which descend on the righteous should make the wicked start! As the cedar bends and shakes, the fir tree should tremble. If anything can fill the impenitent with fear it should be the observing how God deals with His own faithful servants. It is probable enough that the wicked may be disposed to congratulate themselves on their superior prosperity—to look with pity, if not with contempt, on the righteous, as "the God whom they serve seems to reward them with nothing but trouble." That can only be through want of consideration. Let the wicked but ponder the facts of the case, and there is nothing which should so excite their dread of the future as the present misery which falls to the lot of the good.

H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,688.

References: xi. 2.—J. Hiles Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 136; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 272. xi.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 306.

Chap. xii., ver. 1.—"The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him."

I. The Creator of the heavens and earth and the spirit of man has an Israel. The idea of Israel is fellowship with God, and power with God gained in and by that fellowship. Man is haunted by a something issuing from heaven and earth that will not let him rest. A living world is round him, material, but full of spiritual suggestion, inviting him to seek God, and waking him up again when he grows dull and hard. It seems a necessity to man, when beaten and pressed down by these

forces, to which he yet knows himself superior, to cry for help to the Maker of all. One so deeply conscious of the need of help cannot but seek help from the God whom He has found. And this asking, so inevitable, cannot be a futile thing. If asking be a necessity with the spirit that has communion with God, there must be room and need for it on the side of God. God's Israel consists of those who seek Him, and by seeking have power with Him.

II. God has a word for His Israel. Neither the heavens, nor the earth, nor the spirit of a man take the place of a word. They are each a revelation. But they are fuller of questions than of answers. The heart of man needs a word. It is only in words that there is definiteness. One of the grand distinguishing peculiarities of man is that he employs words. By these he reaches the fulness of his being. He makes all shadowy and vague things firm and abiding by words. And shall not God meet him on this highest platform? A word of God is a necessity to the human soul. There cannot be an Israel without a word. God has a word to Israel which makes fellowship close and confiding. The word refreshes the weary soul. It directs and cheers. It has a human tone, while it is Divine. The word gives man the necessary clue to the interpretation of the universe and himself.

III. God's word to Israel is a burden. (1) It is a burden by reason of the weight of its ideas. (2) It is a burden of momentousness and obligation. (3) It is a burden which is easier to bear in whole than in part. (4) It is a burden which removes every other load.

J. Leckie, *Sermons Preached at Ibrox*, p. 21.

Reference: xii. 8.—T. B. Baker, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 187.

Chap. xii., vers. 9-14 (with chap. xiii., vers. 1-6).—"And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem," etc.

I. Here is, first, a remarkable national repentance—remarkable on account of its supposed exciting cause. It presents, indeed, a direct inversion of the state of things generally depicted in the Old Testament Scriptures; for while, generally, we are shown a people subdued to repentance under the pressure of misery and suffering, and then raised, as the result, to heights of prosperity, our seer gives us the spectacle of a people whose repentance is produced by prosperity, who, being delivered from

their straits and hardships, and brought forth into a large place, are thereby awakened to a sense of fault, and laid low in the dust of contrition. Sorrow and disaster, whether by inducing a humbler temper and self-estimate, or by giving an impression of wrath and punishment, or by desolating the external scene and driving the heart in upon itself, is often the means of rousing men to a recognition and conviction of their sins. Is it not, however, a finer thing, and the sign of a finer nature, when good fortune provokes earnest thoughts with regard to duty and our imperfect discharge of it; when, the more life smiles for us and brings up of pleasantness and beautiful possession, the more we yearn to be deserving? And such was the nobler disposition which Zechariah dreamt of being manifested in his countrymen.

II. Observe, secondly, our prophet's vision of the results of the repentance which he pictures. He beheld it prevailing to expiate the transgressions that had been committed—prevailing to secure absolution and forgiveness. "In that day"—that day of general and profound mourning—"there shall be a fountain opened," etc You will remember Cowper's once oft-sung hymn, "There is a fountain filled with blood." Cowper's hymn was professedly based upon this passage; it was from this passage that he got his idea of the guilt-cleansing fountain of Christ's blood; yet, instead of a fountain filled with the blood of an atoning victim, what the Jewish writer had evidently in his mind was a fountain filled with the tears of the people's genuine and deep contrition. He saw Heaven's pardon granted at once to repentance, without need of any slaughtered victim to assist in procuring it. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin" by quickening to repentance.

III. Our prophet beheld, further, issuing from that day of great mourning, a diffused spirit of consecration to the worship and service of Jehovah. Before that spirit idolatry quietly disappeared, like winter before the growing breath of spring, or mists before the climbing sun, with all inclination towards it, all hankering after it—the names of the idols remembered no more.

IV. The prophet seems to trace the gradually completed purification of the country to the spirit cherished and reigning in its homes. It is to the family we must always look for the saving of society; from thence comes its regeneration, or its corruption and decay.

S. A. TIPPLE, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 237.

Chap. xii., ver. 10.—"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced," etc.

I. In this passage Christ is not speaking of His actual crucifiers, but only of their children or descendants. But these children or descendants are described as the parties who pierced the Saviour; and not only so, but it is evident from the form of the expression that they should consider themselves as chargeable with so atrocious a crime. This personal appropriation of the guilt of crucifying Christ is required of us just as much as it will be of the reinstated Jews. It is virtually to deny that we have the same corrupt nature to take for granted that we should have shunned with abhorrence all participation in their crime. The right course is to take the guilt upon ourselves, to consider the Jews as simply our representatives, to regard the Redeemer as One whom we ourselves betrayed and crucified and pierced.

II. Notice the close connection between receiving "the spirit of grace and supplications" and the looking on Him whom we ourselves have pierced. If there were once wrought in men a hearty desire to pray, if men were but made to feel that they have alienated themselves from God by their iniquities, they would set themselves to seek forgiveness, and would be ready to close delightedly with the proffers of the Gospel, admitting the suitableness of its arrangements and admiring their graces. Moved by the spirit of supplication, they would feel that unless there be a Cross at whose feet to fall in vain will they cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

III. Sooner or later, we must look on Him whom we have pierced, and it is wholly dependent on our looking on Him in this our day of probation whether it shall be with terror or with joy that we look on Him in the day of retribution.

H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,583.

References: xii. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 575 vol. xxiii., No. 1,362; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, pp. 380-2. xii. 12-14.—*Ibid.*, p. 384. xii.—W. Lindsay Alexander *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 224. xii., xiii.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 335.

Chap. xiii., ver. 1.—"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David," etc.

I. Into this world, where the fountains were all sin and uncleanness, Messiah came. And for a while He was a fountain

sealed. Within His own bosom He carried the purity of heaven, the calm consciousness of His own divinity, a great deep of gentleness and love and compassion. But that was not enough. It was not enough that He should be a holy visitor, by His surpassing sanctity pronouncing a tacit verdict on the surrounding iniquity; an angelic tourist through the realms of earth, leaving them more wretched and lonely than before. He had come not so much a visitor as a victim, not so much to sojourn as to save. Found in fashion as a man, God the Son became the kinsman of sinners, and engaged in His own Person to achieve an ample atonement for the sins of the world. It was on Calvary that the fountain sealed of incarnate love became the fountain opened of redeeming merit.

II. The fountain is open still. Fresh and efficacious and free as on the day when His mighty sacrifice was offered, the merit of Immanuel still continues. The truth concerning Jesus, published in the Bible, is the fountain opened to the world. The man who believes that truth has his sins washed away. When the muddy Arve joins the limpid Rhone, after a while the bright waters grow troubled, and at last they flow together a turbid stream. But it is not so with this fountain. However many the sins, however much the defilement which it washes away, it springs pure and pellucid as ever, and the reason is that this fountain resembles the sea. Though a limited outlet, it is a boundless tide. In Persia, says a legend, there was a fountain, and if any impurity were cast into it there was sure to be a storm the selfsame day. But here is the very converse. Over the sinner's head are lowering the dark thunderclouds of wrath Divine; but, emboldened by God's own invitation, the sinner casts his sins into the fountain opened, and the sky is clear. God's anger is turned away, and with a pleasant countenance He beholds the believing and returning transgressor.

J. HAMILTON, *Works*, vol. vi., p. 194.

REFERENCES: xiii. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 971; B. Isaac, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 37; J. N. Norton, *Golden Truths*, p. 355.

Chap. xiii., vers. 1-6.

I. IN the words "for sin and for uncleanness" there is apparently an allusion in the former to the water used in the purification of the Levites at their consecration, and in the latter to the water for the purifying of the congregation of Israel,

prepared from mixing the ashes of the red heifer slain as a sacrifice with water. As water applied to the person removes bodily defilement, it becomes a fitting emblem of that which removes from the inner man moral defilement. Here the reference is to the cleansing energy which He who pours on men the spirit of grace and supplication bestows on all who truly repent, and which comes to men through the sacrificial death of Christ, whose "blood cleanseth from all sin."

II. The fountain opened, its cleansing waters are free to all—to the inhabitants of Jerusalem as well as the house of David. The grace of salvation is free to all without respect of persons.

III. True repentance will show itself on the part of those who are subjects of it, in the relinquishment of all former objects of evil attachment, and the entering upon a new life of godliness and holy service. So should it be with the covenant people after the great mourning and the attendant cleansing. As the sins to which Israel was most prone, and which brought on the nation the Divine judgments, were idolatry and false prophecy, so the restoration of the people to a new life of godliness and righteousness is depicted by the extermination of idols and false prophets from the land.

IV. It is for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem that this fountain is said to be opened. They seem to err grievously, however, who infer from this that the prophecy refers to the final conversion of the Jewish people. The prophets are wont to describe the new dispensation in language borrowed from the conditions and usages of the old; and we interpret them aright when keeping this in view; we understand their descriptions not as representations of simple historical facts, but as serving as the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, and as finding their fulfilment in crises and conditions of the kingdom of heaven on earth. They go upon the presumption that the Israel of God was never to be abolished, that its continuity was never to be interrupted, that though the outward national Israel might be cast off because of their rejection of the Good Shepherd, the true Israel, the reality of which the other was but the symbol, the Israel that was really Israel, should continue for ever.

W. LINDSAY ALEXANDER, *Zechariah's Visions and Warnings*, p. 271; see also *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 353.

REFERENCE: R. C. Anderson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 53.

Chap. xiii., ver. 7-9.—"Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered," etc.

I. The Person here represented as smitten by the sword of Divine justice is none other than the Messiah, the Christ. No other being but He is at once man and the fellow of Jehovah, the Lord of hosts; and He alone is the Shepherd whom God promised to set over His people Israel to feed them as a flock. Both these our Lord asserted for Himself (John x. 14; Matt xxvi. 63, 64, xxvii. 43).

II. The stroke inflicted on Him. This was the deadly stroke of Divine justice. As there is but one Being to whom the description of the prophet can refer, so there is but one event to which the command here given can be understood as pointing—the slaying of Him who as the Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep. His death was perpetrated by the "wicked hands" of men, but they were in this only the instruments by which God fulfilled His own purpose and counsel. He was a willing victim; He laid down His life of Himself, but He at the same time recognised the hand of God in the infliction, and held it as a fulfilment of the prediction here recorded.

III. The consequence to the flock of this smiting of the Shepherd. It was twofold. The sheep were to be scattered, but God was to turn back His hand over the humble and meek ones of the flock. The former of these our Lord applied to the dispersion of His disciples as consequent on His crucifixion; the other consequence was realised when the Lord, having been raised from the dead, showed Himself to individuals and to groups of them, and especially when, having, according to His promise given before His death, gone before them into Galilee, He met them there as a body to the number of about five hundred, and there showed Himself unto them alive from the dead, and received their worship as Lord of all.

IV. Though preserved and rescued the little flock would not escape all trouble and suffering. God would bring them through the fire, and refine and purify them in the furnace of affliction, and the result of this discipline would be their recovery from all apostasy, and their final establishment in the Divine favour, and their full union to Jehovah as His people.

W. Lindsay Alexander, *Zechariah's Visions and Warnings*, p. 286; see also *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 161.

References: xiii. 9.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 8; J. Irons,

Thursday Penny Pulpit, vol. ix., p. 61. xiv. 1-11.—W. L. Alexander, *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 357. xiv. 5.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 14. xiv. 6, 7.—B. Gregory, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 49; W. M. Taylor, *Old Testament Outlines*, p. 287.

Chap. xiv., ver. 7.—"But it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light."

THERE are two principles in this promise, which do for the most part regulate all the dealings of God.

I. The first part is a principle of surprise. God delights to frustrate expectations. He introduces His power in a manner and at a moment the least anticipated. The day seems just passing—the darkness gathering—everything looks for night—when all in a moment the light kindles into more than meridian lustre. "At evening time it is light." Thus God keeps to Himself the sovereignty; man is humbled to the dust; reason is all put aside, and God's glory and God's love stand out all alone in the ascendant.

II. The second principle is that of patience. The blessing waits till the evening. It was not in hope's first beaming; it was not in the world's full glare; but in the quiet waiting-time it comes. When faith has been exercised, and graces have been tried, and the heart has been disciplined, do not doubt but that the morning's gifts, be they what they may, are as nothing to the evening's love. The sun may have been shining on you all the day through; still "at evening time it shall be light."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 187.

REFERENCES: xiv. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 160. xiv. 8.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, pp. 183, 278; J. Wells, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 205.

Chap. xiv., ver. 20.—"In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, holiness unto the Lord."

I. LET us inquire what holiness is. What precisely do we mean when we say of a man that he is holy? We imply not simply that he is virtuous, but rather that his virtue has a special and peculiar quality. The virtuous man regulates his conduct by moral principles alone, while the holy man maintains a close and constant fellowship with the living God. The one gives you a lofty idea of his own excellence, the other makes you feel the greatness and purity of God; the life of the one may be maintained without any thought of

Jehovah, that of the other is entirely supported by the communion of his soul with God. The root principles of holiness are constant fellowship with God, and unreserved consecration of the soul and life to God.

II. Let us ask how this holiness is to be obtained. By no mere process of development or natural selection can the unholy man train himself into holiness. Neither can this change be accomplished by means of external rites. The Scriptures tell us with the utmost explicitness that we are regenerated by the power of the Holy Ghost. In order to holiness, the sinner needs to be reconciled to God, and to be made like to God; these are the very things which are to be accomplished through his belief on the Lord Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost.

III. Where is this holiness to be manifested? In the text it is declared that it will be on the bells of the horses, and that is to be understood only as a specimen of a class. The horse is a common animal employed for ordinary purposes every day; and so the prophet would illustrate the principle, that under the new economy holiness would not be restricted to any person, place, or thing, but would characterise the believer's life in all occupations and under any circumstances.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Limitations of Life*, p. 175.

REFERENCES: xiv. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 399. xiv. 20, 21.—J. Fraser, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 537. xiv.—*Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 453.

MALACHI.

REFERENCE . i. 2.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 387.

Chap. i., vers. 2, 3.—"Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau."

I. THERE is no impiety in this inquiry. Granted that God may prefer whom He will; that it is for Him, if it please Him and as it please Him, to put one man before another; yet, if in so doing He allows the reason to appear, there is nothing wrong; nay, rather it is our duty to mark that reason, for it helps to confirm us in our conviction that the Judge of the world will always do right. Now, in the case of Jacob, that reason is not far to seek. There was one quality in him which Esau had not, that must, we believe, have recommended him to God's favour, and that was religion. Jacob, with all his faults, was a religious man. Esau, with much in him that attracts us, was not a religious man.

II. To Esau the present was everything. So that he had abundance of this world's goods, plenty of corn and wine, he was content to forego the hope of the future. We see this stamped on all he did and on all that is written of him in the Bible. He was open-hearted and open-handed, and these are qualities we all admire and ought to admire. But the one thing most needed was wanting in him. He had no religion—no love, no fear of God, no reverence for things holy; he gave no sign by anything that he did that he believed in a life to come. With Jacob it was quite otherwise. With him the future, and not the present, had the most weight. God was continually in his thoughts: he depended on God, and loved to ask counsel of God; and did not feel that he was sufficient of himself, but that his sufficiency was of God. And this piety will account for the preference accorded to him in Scripture over Esau.

R. D. B. RAWNSLEY, *Sermons in Country Churches*, p. 64.

THE character of Jacob is not presented to us as a noble, still less as a perfect, character. It is represented as a character which

in spite of many stains and apparently habitual weakness God in His wisdom saw fit to bless and to adapt for His own purposes.

I. What, then, was the difference between the brothers? It amounts in substance to this: Jacob, with all his faults was a religious man. He did believe in God. He did believe that his life was to be a life of obedience to God. He did believe that the God of his fathers had called him, even *him*, to be His servant and His witness. Even his ungenerous and dishonest efforts to obtain the birthright prove that he at least attached a meaning and a value to these privileges. He believed in something and some Person beyond and above himself.

II. Thus, then, we have two men brought before us for our instruction. The one has much that is attractive, much that commands our sympathies, if not our respect; and yet he has nothing in him on which the Spirit of God can fasten so as to make him a blessing to the world. On the other hand, we have a man subtle and self-seeking, capable of offences which seem most removed from the noble character, and yet he communes with God. He rests upon God. He asks God's guidance. He believes in God's calling and God's providence; probably he confesses to God with shame and sorrow the sins by which he seems to the outward eye to have thriven. Surely you do not deliberately doubt as to which of these brothers was in the main right, and which was in the main wrong. Learn from the text that you must come to fear and think of God. You cannot, you dare not, live a life of mere animal enjoyment, however innocent it may seem to you to be. You dare not subject yourself to that solemn sentence: "I hated Esau; I could not make of him a chosen vessel for speeding the coming of My kingdom."

H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 12.

REFERENCES: i. 3.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 526. i. 6.—W. Braden, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 152. i. 8.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 263. i. 11.—H. D. Rawnsley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 358; J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 89. i. 13.—J. Norton, *Golden Truths*, p. 455. i. 18.—R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 315. **ii. 1.**—J. Hiles Hitchens, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 363.

Chap. ii., ver. 2.—"And I will curse your blessings."

As we think upon this text, we can discern two different shades of sense in which we may understand it. We see two ways in which a blessing may be cursed.

I. Blessings may be said to be cursed, if God deprives us of the power of enjoying them. You know that when a blind man looks at the most beautiful scene, he sees nothing of it. The blue of the sky and the green of the earth to him are one great blank. Worldly blessings have a natural and great power to make a man cheerful and happy. It does tend to make any one pleased and cheerful when his circumstances are prosperous, his friends kind, his home comfortable, and his character respected. But in one moment God can make an end of all this. In one moment, without changing in the least our outward aspect, or our outward circumstances, God can make our souls as incapable of feeling happiness in the possession of our outward blessings as the blind man's eyes are of discerning the light of day.

II. Blessings may be said to be cursed if God suffers them to have an evil tendency upon our souls. All the blessings which God bestows upon us are sent with a specific purpose. They have all a natural tendency, and this tendency, generally expressed, is to lead men to think seriously about their souls, and earnestly to turn to Christ. But it is possible they may have quite an opposite effect; they may do us harm spiritually. They may make it more and more unlikely—they may even make it impossible—that we should find our home in heaven at last. And whenever this comes to be their tendency and result, then we say that God has cursed these blessings. This is true, (1) of such earthly blessings as wealth, comfort, friends, (2) of spiritual blessings, such as (*a*) the means of grace, (*b*) the regenerating, comforting, santifying, Holy Spirit of God.

A. K. H. B., *Sunday Afternoons in the Parish Church*, p. 109.

REFERENCES: ii. 5.—J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 361. ii. 6.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 99. ii. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1415. iii. 1.—*Ibid.*, vol. viii., No. 470; H. Melvill, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2611; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 332; vol. xvi., p. 24; A. J. Griffith, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 299; *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 183.

Chap. iii., vers. 1-3.—"Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me," etc.

INTERPRETING this prediction by the event, let us read what it says,—

I. As to the manner of the Saviour's coming. (1) He was

to come announced by a forerunner. (2) He was to come to fulfil a great commission. (3) He was to come suddenly.

II. Consider what is said of a certain work that the Messiah was coming to accomplish. Looking into the text, we find that it sets before us: (1) The severity of the trials through which Christians may be called to pass. It is a trial by fire. Fire is the symbol of all that our nature most shrinks from, yet it is the symbol of what our nature must pass through. (2) The agency by which the trial is wrought. It is the Lord; therefore let no man's heart fail him: "He" shall do all this. (*a*) He alone appoints it. (*b*) He alone effects it. (*c*) He is present all through the operation of the trial. (3) The utility of the trial. (*a*) It is a sign of preciousness. You never try that which is unquestionably worthless. Do you cast a stone into the crucible? Do you winnow chaff? Do you plough a rock? While the Refiner is subjecting dross to the high heat of adversity, it is only because, mixed with it, He detects a Divine particle which cost the sacrifice of Calvary, which transcends the worth of worlds, and which is destined to shine for ever. (*b*) It is a test of genuineness. Trial is the grand revealer of character, the certain analyst of life. There are depths of undiscovered character in us all. "No man knows what he is until he is tried." (*c*) It is a medium of purification. The dust, the stones, the grains of sand which fire finds in the silver it will not leave there. (*d*) It is a preparative for service. Powers of great usefulness can be educated in no other way. Powers of endurance are unknown, where there has been nothing to endure. Powers of rule belong alone to those who have learned to rule by learning to obey. (*e*) It is the precursor of glory. Cling to the joyful creed, so radiantly distinct in our Gospel revelation, that trial alone belongs to earth, glory alone belongs to heaven; that, "absent from the body," the soul is at once "present with the Lord."

C. STANFORD, *Symbols of Christ*, p. 175.

REFERENCES: iii. 1-3.—W. Jay, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 37. iii. 1-4.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 397. iii. 2.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 31; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 289; J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 133.

Chap. iii., ver. 3.—"He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver."

UNDER the image of the text is symbolized the whole course of the sanctification of the elect, until, through the searching discipline of God, they attain the perfection to which they are predestined.

Our Lord's Passion has caused an entire revolution in the experiences and views of mankind. As the Cross, once an object accursed, is now elevated among material forms to be the object of highest reverence; even so suffering in the flesh, from being regarded as the mark of Divine displeasure, is become a means of closest union with God, a seal of His love, a law of highest sanctity. The laws which regulate our purification move along two different lines, each having its counterpart in the passion of our Lord.

I. One form of spiritual chastening is found in the internal discipline, the self-imposed effort involving secret pain, with which the soul, strengthened by the grace of God, subdues its natural emotions in meeting and overcoming trial. To nerve our hearts and overcome in the hour of temptation, and choose the higher course, is the very condition of our sanctification.

II. The outward circumstances in which we are placed have, moreover, their own special office as a further means of spiritual chastening. We are girt about with innumerable influences, from which we cannot escape, which act upon us unceasingly from hour to hour. The fall has caused that close fellowship, that keen sensibility, which were to have been the rich enhancement of every pure joy, to be the occasions of a searching discipline, and ofttimes the aggravations of suffering, in proportion to the prevalence of sin and the multiform workings of our common infirmity.

III. Two incidental results from the imagery employed in the text, to strengthen and encourage the soul in its course of trial. (1) It may have been that the custom of the refiner watching the furnace, to see his face reflected on the surface of the burning mass, as the test of its attaining the required purity, was in the mind of the Spirit when selecting this image, to denote the mystery of our sanctification. Such a custom is a beautiful exemplification of the momentous truth that the object of all spiritual discipline is the restoration of the likeness of God. (2) Silver, in its pure state, is the brightest of all metals. The selection of silver in the text conveys the blessed promise of the exceeding glory with which, even now, humanity is being clothed, as it passes out of great tribulation, its robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb.

T. T. CARTER, *Sermons*, p. 275.

I. LOOK first at the process: "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and purge them as gold and silver." From this we see clearly that one important truth is assumed, and

that is the inherent preciousness of man. That which is not of more or less value no one will take the pains to purify. The Scriptures nowhere, from the beginning, allow you to suppose that they treat man as an insignificant creature. When they introduce him at first it is in great stateliness, as the crown and flower of creation, the last in the ascending series of earthly creatures, and the best. When he fell from holiness and happiness he did not fall from his lordship. That still remained, though often sadly perverted and degraded, a lordship of tyranny and wrong.

Our Saviour constantly and anxiously keeps man to the front and at the top of all other things. He set His seal upon the infinite worth of man by taking his nature. The cradle of Bethlehem is the mirror in which man can see his own face as the image of the invisible God. If we were worthless Christ would not sit as a refiner and purifier of silver. He sees the dross, and He sees the metal, and He does not cast away the metal because of the dross, but He seeks to cast out the dross from the metal.

II. "He shall purify." Here we see the great aim and purpose of the Gospel. So far as man's own life and character are concerned, there is no other of higher end that the Gospel can contemplate than this—our purification. This is the end of our Saviour's incarnation, the end of His teaching, the end of His atoning death, the end of His intercession, the end of all His discipline and providence with respect to us; this is His will, even our sanctification.

It is clear, from the words of our text, that among the agencies through means of which this purity is to be accomplished, one is that of trial—trial as if by fire. It is an unspeakable joy to the Christian to know that, as he must be tried in the fire, he is to be tried under the eye, and hand, and heart of his Saviour. We know that a process over which He presides will be conducted with infinite wisdom. He alone knows the nature of the evil which has to be separated, and He alone knows the kind of trials to send.

E. MELLOR, *The Hem of Christ's Garment*, p. 72.

REFERENCES: iii. 3—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1,575; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. vi., p. 329; F. D. Maurice, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 205.

Chap. iii., ver. 6.—"I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

WE can all of us, perhaps, look back to occasions when, if

God had been pleased suddenly to call us away, in the state in which we were living at that moment, we could only have put our hands upon our lips and confessed that the sentence was perfectly just. Why are we here, the survivors of the thousands and tens of thousands who have gone before us? Every one will at once say, "It is the long-suffering of God." But why is He long-suffering?

The solution which the prophet, or rather which God Himself, gives of this matter is twofold—one sovereignty "I am the Lord;" and the other unchangeableness, "I change not."

I. The sovereignty of God is a subject full of comfort to a balanced mind. It lays the base of every man's salvation in the free electing power of God, which is manifested to the individual soul by the outgoings of the Holy Spirit producing certain emotions and feelings in the man's mind. Therefore it is that God loves us with such an unwearied love,—because His love preceded our love, and He loved us from all eternity. Sovereignty is the cause of forbearance. Mercy is, by the consent of all nations, the prerogative of the throne. Christ is exalted that He may give remission of sins. His cross justifies the act of forgiveness, and His throne makes it.

II. "I change not." In the hand of God there is a chart laid down and accurately mapped before the foundation of this world was laid. Nothing occurs in this earth which is not the transcript of that chart. It comes from one mind—it is wrought out by one man—it illustrates one truth, and it reaches to one appointed end. Changing pilgrims through this changing scene, fix your eyes upon the changeless. Rest yourselves on these two grand ideas—the foundation of all life and of all peace for ever,—"I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, p. 236.

REFERENCES: iii. 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. i., No. 1; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 307; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 461; vol. v., p. 332; J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 447; F. Silver, *Ibid.*, vol. x., p. 221.

Chap. iii., ver. 7.—"Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?"

I. THIS is one of those verses which show most clearly and graciously the forethought of our heavenly Teacher, in providing for us the Old Testament: (1) in that words spoken on

a particular occasion to the Jews are made to convey a heavenly warning and message to Christians of all generations at all times; (2) in that Almighty God here, as in many other places, furnishes comfort and instruction beforehand to that bitterest of cares and doubts, the care and doubt which must hang over those who feel that they have grieved His Spirit, received in baptism, by wilful sin, and having been partakers of the heavenly gift, have fallen away and trodden Christ, His grace, His warnings, His example, under foot.

II. "Wherein shall we return?" Instead of submitting at once to God's reproof, the Jews of Malachi's time make answer, and pretend to argue the matter with Him; they go on as if they did not understand what was said, as if their conscience did not smite them at all. The reply in the text, "Wherein shall we return?" may be taken in the like sense, as if they who were reproved were not aware of any particular reason why they should be called to repentance. Or it may be understood in a milder and better meaning, as spoken by a person really in doubt, wishing to repent, but hardly knowing how to begin. Either way, it is a manner of speaking and thinking which one meets with every day in our times. For the benefit of both sorts of answerers, God's wisdom has condescended to point out, by what follows in the prophet, the right course to be pursued. The particular sin which he here reproves in them is their robbing God of His tithes; and when they say, "Wherein shall we return?" this is His Divine command, "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house," etc. That is, Make a courageous effort and force yourself to do those things which are most contrary to the particular sins against which conscience warns you. Do not stand waiting and hesitating, and asking how you must set about the work of repentance, but at once begin exercising yourself in whatever most contradicts the bad tendencies which you cannot help being aware of. Only let us begin courageously and at once, and persevere humbly and patiently; for the journey is great for us, the time is short, and we, alas! are far behind.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. iv., p. 311.

REFERENCES: iii. 7.—M. Dix, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, p. 286; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 176; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. x., p. 231; J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas to Epiphany*, p. 236.

Chap. iii., ver. 8.—"Will a man rob God?"

I. (1) HEAVEN is not the only domain of God's vast property. All here on earth belongs to Him as well. If all belongs to God, then comes in the liability to commit robbery against Him. For, it may be, that there shall be no general habitual sense and acknowledgment of His sovereign claims; no feeling that all does so belong. This is the comprehensive spirit and principle of the wrong toward Him, and will go into many special forms; this state of mind is a general refusal to acknowledge His law. (2) Coming to a more particular account of what may justly be called "robbing God," we may say that it is so, for anything to be suffered to have a stronger power over us than His will, so that that shall obtain from us what His will obtains not; whether it be our own inclinations—or the opinions of men—or the spirit, customs, example of the world.

II. A few plain particulars should be specified of what we cannot withhold from God without this guilt. (1) One plainly at first sight is, a very considerable proportion of thought concerning Him. (2) Fear, of the deepest, most solemn kind, is due to God. (3) Will a man refuse the gentler affections—love, gratitude, humble reliance? These affections are to be given —to go out—to something. And are they just to go out to a few inferior objects close around us, and stop there, quite absorbed? Is it to the perfect excellence, the supreme goodness, the transcendent beauty, that the soul of man is to be indifferent and insensible? (4) Each and every precept of God's law tells of something we may refuse Him, namely, obedience; and a temptation stands close by each.

III. It is not for His own sake (in any sense intelligible to us) that God requires our homage, service, and obedience. It is for our sake; because all the things He requires will be for our good, here or hereafter, not only because He will so, but by the nature of the case. To be conformed to the will of God,—to be delighted in performing services to Him,—to be animated with the love of holiness and all that is good, and hatred of sin —this would be to be happy (in heaven itself), and therefore required. In robbing God men iniquitously and fatally rob themselves.

J. FOSTER, *Lectures*, 2nd series, p. 339.

REFERENCES: iii. 8.—W. Baird, *The Hallowing of our Common Life*, p. 22. iii. 8-18.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 293.

Chap. iii., ver. 10.—"And prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

I. God has ever connected the enjoyment and use of certain blessings with the observance of His ordinances, and with obedience to His requirements.

II. Although God has thus connected blessedness with obedience, and with the observance of His ordinances, the people of God have often neglected them,—neglected institutions founded for their benefit and neglected Divine precepts and prohibitions.

III. Such neglect often brings spiritual adversity and sometimes exposes to sore affliction.

IV. Our awaking to the knowledge that we have not all that God has promised, and to the consciousness of spiritual adversity, should be immediately followed by searchings of heart.

V. The discovery of the neglect and the disobedience as the cause of our particular adversity should be instantly followed by supplying the omission. To this God speaks by the text, "Prove Me." Prove Me, not by asking Me for some new commandment but by obeying the old neglected commandment —not by seeking new paths, but by returning to the old paths.

S. Martin, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 4th series, No. 2.

References: iii. 10.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 362; J. N. Norton, *Every Sunday*, p. 329. iii. 14.—*Fountain*, Aug. 5th, 1880.

Chap. iii., ver. 16.—"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name."

In the text the prophet describes the method used by good men to confirm themselves in their faith. "They that feared the Lord," he says, "spake often one to another." It was their surest means, by God's grace, of resisting the temptation, of their enemy, and so it is ours. It was the greatest earthly blessing of their lives, and so it is of ours. An earthly blessing indeed it ought scarcely to be called, for it reaches from earth to heaven. The communion of saints which is begun here will go on for ever and ever; only that whereas now they who fear the Lord speak to one another of Him, hereafter He will himself join their company, and they shall be one with Him and in the Father.

It has been well observed, that when Christ sent forth His

seventy disciples during His own lifetime to preach the Gospel through the cities of Judah, He sent them forth two and two together. What the Apostles needed in their journeys as preachers of the Gospel, we need equally on our journey through life. The great object for which Christians were formed into a Church or society was that they might afford to one another a mutual comfort and support. But even where the feelings of Christian brotherhood were strongest towards the whole society of Christians, still there was room for individual friendships of a yet closer kind; where the comfort and support would be yet dearer and more effectual.

I. Consider the support—comfort—to be derived from our communion with the Church or society of Christians. Every Christian ought to feel that between himself and a man who is also a Christian there is a natural connexion of the closest kind. How often do we see that similarity of tastes in some worldly matters bring two persons together, in spite of every difference of station, of manners, and even of general character. How much more should this be the case, when the point of agreement is that one thing needful, in comparison with which everything else fades into nothing!

II. The text should be true of the society of Christians in general, but it is, and ought to be, much more so of those who take sweet counsel together, and are bound to one another by the closest ties of personal friendship. He who is without Christian friends loses the most powerful earthly instrument by which he is saved from temptation and encouraged to good. Few men, if any, can keep their hearts fixed as they ought to do, on God and on Christ. They cannot encourage as they should do the workings of the Holy Spirit within them, without sometimes speaking out of the abundance of their heart, and pouring forth to others the thoughts which most engross them. Therefore it is the interest, and if it be the interest in spiritual matters it is the duty, of every Christian to endeavour to secure the blessing of a Christian friend.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 190.

I. THE prophet Malachi lived some time after the restoration of the Jews to their own country, and the building of the second temple, when they had been brought back from the captivity in Babylon. He was the last of all the prophets, and flourished about four hundred years before the coming of Christ. Of this period of four hundred years, therefore, the Bible tells

us nothing; nor, as far as the Jews are concerned, can we learn much about it from any other quarter. We know only that they were left during this time just under similar circumstances to those in which we ourselves are living now. I mean, that they were left in a state of trial, to see how far they would make use of the means of grace already given; that the revelation of God was for the time completed; miracles were at an end and prophecies were at an end; there was in their hands the volume of the Law and the Prophets, and in that written word alone were they to seek for the knowledge of God's will. At the same time they were taught to look forward to some future day when God should again visit them in a more open manner, and should establish a state of things far better and more perfect than that which actually existed. We see at once how exactly this corresponds with the condition in which we ourselves are placed now. The history of the Bible mentions further a third case similar to the two which I have noticed: the state, namely, of the Jews, for another period of nearly three hundred years, from the death of Joshua to the beginning of the ministry of Samuel.

II. Twice then already have the servants of God had their term of patient waiting; twice have they had to struggle with the temptations of the world, with no other weapons than the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. And twice has experience shown that their faith and their struggles were not in vain; and that the Lord in whom they trusted was able and willing to save them to the uttermost. If we are longer waiting for the fulfilment of the promise, yet its language is more positive and clear than it ever was before, and the blessings to which it directs our hope are of a nature far more valuable. He who looks for complete certainty and the removal of every difficulty in the way of our belief in Christ, is confounding earth and heaven together. There we shall enjoy perfect knowledge, and our service will be one of untroubled love; but here we must walk by faith, not by sight, and the enemy of our souls will never cease his assaults against them.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 181.

RELIGIOUS conversation.

I. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." (1) *Then.* The context tells us that the time spoken of was an evil time. So prevalent was sin, so bold, and apparently so prosperous, that people were beginning to say, "It is vain

to serve God." (2) "*They that feared the Lord.*" It is a sufficient description of the good, be they many or few, that they are those who fear God. In times of difficulty and discouragement they spake often one to another. It does not expressly say what about; but it is implied that they spoke to one another as those that feared the Lord; as those who had a common cause, and that common cause the cause of good, the cause of God. They tried the experiment of sympathy, of combined counsel, and combined action too.

II. Religious conversation should begin in God's worship. Here at least we can communicate one with another on the common basis of the fear of God, and take in large supplies of strength and faith at the very Fountain-head of both.

III. Another way in which all who fear God ought also to speak often one to another is in the privacy of true friendship, when to one faithful ear you can confide something of your personal difficulties and temptations, and exchange that sympathy which is always strengthening, even where it may seem to be rather the confession of weakness.

IV. "The Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him." Let us remember that for every idle word we speak we shall give account in the day of judgment. Of all the sayings written down from Christ's lips in the Book of God, none surely is so terrible in its sound as that which declares: "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, p. 316.

CONSIDER: I. The comfort and value of Christian friendship. Who is there that has ever analyzed his emotions that has not felt how large a portion of his joys spring from the fount of sympathy? In solitariness there is no happiness; and there is hardly to be found in Scripture a more touching exhibition of the solicitude of our Divine Parent for our happiness than is to found in these words: "God setteth the solitary in families." The friendships of the world are bound only by the ropes of selfish sand, and mayhap, when reliance strains upon them, will give way. But the blessed communion of saints is formed of the golden links of a holy love and godly principle. A friendship which coheres by virtue of a mutual love of Christ can never be sundered.

II. The prevailing power of intercessory prayer. Herein it is that Christian friendships are so incomparably superior to the

friendships of the world. Happy is the man who can reckon among his friends one, two, three, who are in favour with God, and who can go with him and for him to the throne of grace, and who have interest, so to speak, in the court of heaven. When the secrets of this mysterious world are laid open at a future day we shall be astonished to find what the intercessory prayers of the "hidden ones" have done, and how kings and statesmen, how churches and pulpits, have been influenced by the electric touches of these secretly spoken supplications which have gone up from the hearts of kneeling cottagers, and have entered into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth.

R. GLOVER, *By the Waters of Babylon*, p. 91.

I. GODLINESS is here presented as the firm basis of confederation and communion.

II. The godly spoke (1) of God's holy name; (2) of His awful power; (3) of His precious promises; (4) of His immutable truth.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 20.

REFERENCE: iii. 16.—W. Arnot, *Good Words*, 1862, p. 441.

Chap. iii., vers. 16, 17.

THERE are three main features of this description in the text.

I. The book of remembrance. Probably the rudiment of this idea is to be found in Ezra vi. 1-5. There was a roll found on a critical occasion, "in the palace which is in the province of the Medes," the remembrance of which the Jews would not willingly let die. But what chiefly concerns us is the fundamental thought. The Lord knew these men by name. Those who, like them, stake all on fidelity to God, who seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, are the upper ten thousand of the universe, the peerage of heaven, through eternity.

II. There is the recognition of their sonship. "I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

III. The day shall come when the book shall be brought forth, when the names shall be read out before an assembled universe, and shall shine as headstones of beauty in the new creation through eternity.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 29.

THE text is an evident and happy illustration of the advantages of Christian fellowship. It would appear that in the olden time

Christian fellowship, or the communion of saints, was: (1) commonly practised; (2) divinely noticed; (3) blessed by reward.

I. One great purpose of the Saviour's incarnation and of the call and authority of His disciples was to establish a Gospel Church. The central thought—the great necessity of churchmanship—is union with Christ, participation in the benefit of His dying, transformation through the influence of His Spirit. But this spiritual change is effected in human hearts. Human hearts have in them chords of sympathy and a strong social instinct, so that, by inevitable and congenial affinity, like will yearn for like. Hence arises organization, the gathering together of those who think alike, who acknowledge the same supreme obligation, who are inspired by the same majestic hope, and who travel to the same assured and glorious recompense of reward.

II. (1) One purpose which seems essentially involved in the possession of spiritual Christianity is the bearing witness for Christ. This would seem to necessitate an organized system of testimony. (2) Another thing which seems to necessitate Church membership is respect for the memory of Christ; and for the ordinances which He appointed of perpetual obligation in His Church. His object was to separate a people, not merely as the recipients of His truth, but as the instruments of its extension, and at once its depositary and its herald. He appointed, moreover, initiatory and confirmatory sacraments: Baptism as the gate of entrance; the Eucharist as the banquet of the faithful, and as the renewal of the consecrating vow. But the sacraments are dispensed in the Church, and in the Church only. (3) Again, the Church exists for purposes of spiritual aggression. She is to preach the Gospel of the kingdom for a witness unto all nations. It is manifest that this work, to which its charter of incorporation binds it, can be accomplished only by associated efforts. It is our duty to avow ourselves of the Church rather than of the world, and to throw in whatever we possess of energy, and influence, and zeal with one or other of the troops which are displaying the common standard of the Cross.

W. Morley Punshon, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 267.

Reference: iii. 16, 17.—W. Arnot, *Good Words*, 1862, p. 443.

Chap. iii., ver. 17.—"My jewels."

I. Notice the finding of the jewel. Just as the diamond and the gold are hidden among the rocks and earth, mud and sand, and are only found by great labour and trouble, so God's jewels are

lost and hidden among vile sins and earthly habits, and shut up in hard, stony hearts; it is with great trouble He discerns them. He sent His Son down from heaven to seek His lost jewels; and He had to come and work in the muddy river-beds and in the dark earth and rocky mines to find them.

II. The fashioning of the jewel. Jesus finds His jewels and snatches them out of their sins, but they are not yet fit to be worn by God. He has to give them over to a most skilful Artificer who purifies and polishes them, and forms them into jewels fit for God to wear. This is the Holy Ghost. The Holy Spirit uses a great variety of means to fashion God's jewels: (1) Water; water is used to cleanse the diamond and the gold. What is the water which the Holy Ghost uses? It is the Word (Eph. v. 25-27). (2) Fire; the fire which the Holy Spirit uses is affliction. Affliction melts hearts, and then they flow into God's mould.

III. The wearing of the jewel. Kings and great people who have many jewels keep most of them locked fast; but on great occasions, such as a coronation day, they bring them all out. So there is a day coming when God is to gather together all His jewels and wear them before all eyes. (1) He will rejoice in the beauty of His jewels. (2) He will rejoice in them as a display of His wealth of love.

J. STALKER, *The New Song*, p. 131.

REFERENCES: iii. 17.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 403; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 295; H. V. Macdona, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 568; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 447; vol. iv., p. 311. iii. 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1415.

Chap. iv., ver. 2.—"But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings."

THERE are three reasons why Christ has received this name, "The Sun of Righteousness."

I. He gives Light. He lived in the world and was the Sun of the world. The great and wise of every land—poets, philosophers, inventors, teachers—may be compared to the stars, but He alone is the Sun. Why? Because He brought knowledge to us infinitely greater and more precious than all other knowledge besides. He made God manifest to men. He revealed the means of saving the soul from death. He discovered to men a new world—the better land above the stars.

II. He gives Life. He is the life of the soul. Sin is its

death. Sin is like the frost which withers and desolates the land. But Christ is like the summer sun that drives the cold away, and restores life and beauty to the dead earth. He releases our souls from the mortal hold of sin, and bids them live.

III. He gives Joy. Darkness has always been the symbol of sorrow, and sunshine of joy. Christ is the Sun of the soul, because He fills it with joy. There is no joy in the world like that which Christ gives. How does Christ give joy? It is by giving love and by giving salvation. Not only does He shine on those who love Him in this world, but He stands in the zenith of the better world and floods it for evermore with joy.

J. STALKER, *The New Song*, p. 105.

REFERENCES: **iv. 2.**—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 1,020; vol. xxv., No. 1,463; *Ibid.*, *My Sermon Notes*: *Ecclesiastes to Malachi*, p. 390; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 217; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 88; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 360.

Chap. iv., vers. 4, 5.—"Remember ye the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

NOTICE: I. Some points of resemblance between Moses and Elijah in their respective histories. (1) Moses and Elijah were both witnesses for God in a wicked age. They were confessors in their generation. (2) They were both summoned to a mountain, and there conversed with God. (3) Both of these prophets were endued with power to sustain an extraordinary fast of forty days; herein prefiguring the fast of our Blessed Lord in the wilderness. (4) Their miracles of power resembled one another. (5) In the manner of their departure from the world, there were points of resemblance. They were both forewarned of their departure; they were found of God in the midst of their work, and heard His call and went on their way till they were taken by Him; and after their translation their bodies could nowhere be found.

II. Why did Moses and Elijah appear on the mountain beside the Lord? The obvious answer will be, that the Law and the Prophets, as represented respectively by them, might witness to the Gospel. The law, in itself so good, may become a dead letter; and if it be revived by the Prophets, it cannot convey life. Our nature needs a living Saviour, ever living, ever present; not a Law to obey, nor a Prophet to hear, but a living person to fear, to love, to worship, in whom, it may lose itself, and crown itself with His own glory.

III. But to conclude with a few remarks on the practical influence of this scene upon ourselves. Perhaps the thought of heaven is the point of highest light in our hearts; but after all is it more than a point? The details of this life are almost infinite. How small in proportion is the space filled up by the thought of the life to come! Look at Moses on the mount. His life on earth was long and varied. And his apparition with Christ in glory, how short it was, how briefly told, a point of high light indeed, but only a point. And yet as every heart will own, that moment with his Lord in glory, comprised all his life. So will it be with you. Your life on earth seems long, and all its cares and interests a great matter. Nevertheless, you are really nothing, but what you are in God; in a sense far more profound than most of us feel, when we lightly use the words, "In Him we live and move and have our being."

C. W. FURSE, *Sermons Preached at Richmond*, p. 189; see also *Anglican Pulpit To-day*, p. 72; C. Kingsley, *Sermons for the Times*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: iv. 5.—G. Moberly, *Brightstone Sermons*, p. 244. iv. 5, 6.—J. Fraser, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 401.

Chap. iv., ver. 6 (with Rev. xxii., ver. 21).—"Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

IT is, of course, only an accident that these words close the Old and the New Testaments. In the Hebrew Bible Malachi's prophecies do not stand at the end; but he was the last of the Old Testament prophets, and after him, there were "four centuries of silence." I venture, then, to look at these significant closing words of the two Testaments as conveying the spirit of each, and suggesting some thoughts about the contrast and the harmony and the order that subsist between them.

I. Notice, the apparent contrast and the real harmony and unity of these two texts. In the first text we have distinctly gathered up the spirit of millenniums of Divine revelation, all of which declare this one thing—that, as certainly as there is a God, every transgression and disobedience receives, and must receive, its just recompense of reward. And then turn to the other, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." What has become of the thunder? All melted into dewy rain of love and pity and compassion. The Apostolic benediction is the declaration of the Divine purpose, and the inmost heart

and loftiest meaning of all the words which, from the beginning, God hath spoken is that His condescending, pardoning, self-bestowing mercy, may fall upon all hearts, and gladden every soul. So there seems to emerge, and there is, a very real significant contrast. But beneath the contrast there is a real harmony, for nowhere are there more tender utterances and sweeter revelations of a Divine mercy than in that ancient Law with its attendant prophets. And nowhere, through all the thunderings and lightnings of Sinai, are there such solemn words of retribution as dropped from the lips of the Incarnate Love.

II. Notice the relation of the grace to the punishment. (1) Is it not love which proclaims judgment? Are not the words of my first text, if you take them all, merciful, however they wear a surface of threatening? "Lest I come." He speaks that He may not come, and declares the issue of sin in order that that issue may never need to be experienced by us that listen to Him. (2) The grace is manifested in bearing punishment and in bearing it away by bearing it.

III. Notice the alternative which these texts open for us. You must have either the destruction or the grace. And, more wonderful still, the same coming of the same Lord will be—to one man the destruction, and to another the manifestion and reception of His perfect grace.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, Nov. 25th, 1886.

REFERENCE: **iv. 6.**—W. G. Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, **vol. xix., p. 243.**

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